



## THE FINE ART OF MEDITATION

Mystical Insights,  
Practical Advice



COVER: Inspired by nature, a striving meditator begins to explore his infinite inner worlds; (above) a new book lists the delights of Hindu festivals, feeding mouth and soul. These delicious *sunnin undralu* are dhal and rice laddus from Andhra Pradesh.

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# Delhi's State Craft

# Emporium

**Shop the whole of  
India on a single  
street... page 18**

*Village arts: A box of wooden bangles on  
display at the Karnataka State Emporium*



# Welcome

## TO HINDUISM TODAY'S DIGITAL EDITION!

I am pleased to welcome you to the free digital edition of Hinduism Today magazine. It is the fulfillment of a vision held by my Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, founder of Hinduism Today, to bring the magazine's profound Hindu teachings to the widest possible audience. The text of each issue has long been available on the Web, right back to 1979, but without the photographs and art. Now you have here the entire contents of the printed edition, with all photos and art. Plus, it is interactive—every link is live; click and you go to a web page. You can participate in the magazine in a number of ways, accessed through buttons on the right. And you can help support this free edition in two ways: make an online contribution (even a small one); patronize our specialized advertisers. Explore the resources here, enjoy our latest edition and e-mail us if you are inspired.

*Bodhinatha Veylanawami*

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# DIASPORA

PORTUGAL

## New Hindu Facilities in Portugal

THE AGELESS, INDOMITABLE vigor and resilience of Sanatana Dharma has manifested itself in Lisbon, Portugal. Hindus migrated to that city after the decolonization of Mozambique, when Portugal held parts of Gujarat. In 1975 they formed the Comunidade

Hindu de Portugal ([www.comunidadehindu.org](http://www.comunidadehindu.org)), beginning with cultural activities and later forming a non-profit organization. Now 9,000 strong, Lisbon's Hindu community has created an inspiring model for Hindus worldwide. In 1998 they officially inaugurated a huge Radha-Krishna temple and social center to serve the surrounding community. Covering 15,610 square meters (3.86 acres), the complex offers a school of Gujarati, a nursery, a home for the aged, a library, an infirmary and a vegetarian restaurant, as well as workshops, music rooms, game rooms and exhibits.

Use Alta Vista's Babel Fish to translate the history section of the site for the full, inspiring story—and be sure to visit and join the pujas on your next trip to Europe!



Above: The grand entrance to the large Radha-Krishna temple; below: devotees attend a discourse inside the giant main temple hall; left: architect's conceptual painting of the 3.86-acre complex.



Over 180 countries gathered for COP-13, the December, 2007, United Nations Climate Change Conference in Denpasar, Bali

INDONESIA

## Bali Climate Conference Is a Success

TEN THOUSAND PARTICIPANTS, including representatives of over 180 countries and observers from intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations, converged in Bali from December 3 to 15, 2007, for the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP-13). After two weeks of wrangling and bitter controversy, the principals finally signed the "Bali Roadmap," an agreement to proceed with future negotiations. Up until December 14 the US had deadlocked negotiations, demanding that developing nations commit to reducing their greenhouse gas emissions. Members of G-77, a 130-member bloc of developing countries spanning Africa, Asia and Latin America, were angered by those demands, in view of the notorious lack of progress—or even commitment—by the US itself. Today the G-77 countries bear

the burden of global warming caused by rich countries. In the US, the per capita emission of CO<sub>2</sub> from fuel combustion is roughly 20 tonnes per year, compared to 6–12 tonnes for most European countries, 4 tonnes in China and just 1.1 tonnes in India.

On the 15th, the European Union and US finally agreed to drop their demands for binding targets and signed the agreement. Environmental groups and some delegates have criticized the agreement as weak, while others consider it an historic achievement. Stay tuned for the next conference in Copenhagen, 2009.

What you can *you* do? Plant trees—they consume CO<sub>2</sub>! And become a vegetarian, if you are not already. The demand for pasture and grain for meat animals is the primary force driving the destruction of old-growth forests. It takes 16 pounds of edible grain and soybeans to produce one pound of beef. Get involved. Download the Bali roadmap from the United Nations site: [http://unfccc.int/meetings/cop\\_13/items/4049.php](http://unfccc.int/meetings/cop_13/items/4049.php)



Nobel Peace Prize awardees IPCC/Rajendra Pachauri and Al Gore

NORWAY

## Nobel Prize Winners Voice Hindu Wisdom

THE 2007 NOBEL PEACE prize was jointly awarded to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and Al Gore. The IPCC was credited for its definitive research on the issues and dangerous impact of climate change. Former US Vice President, Al Gore, was honored for single-handedly bringing the crisis to the forefront of world attention. In the December 10, 2007, Nobel lectures, Hindus were proud to

hear quotes from our spiritual traditions. IPCC chairman R. K. Pachauri invoked the Vedas, "The philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, which means 'the whole universe is one family,' must dominate global efforts to protect the global commons." And Al Gore reminded us that, "Mahatma Gandhi awakened the largest democracy on Earth and forged a shared resolve with what he called *satyagraha*, or 'truth force.' In every land, the truth—once known—has the power to set us free." These were not mere acceptance speeches; they conveyed startling information on vital issues. Be informed. Visit: [http://nobel-prize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/2007/](http://nobel-prize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2007/)

SCIENCE

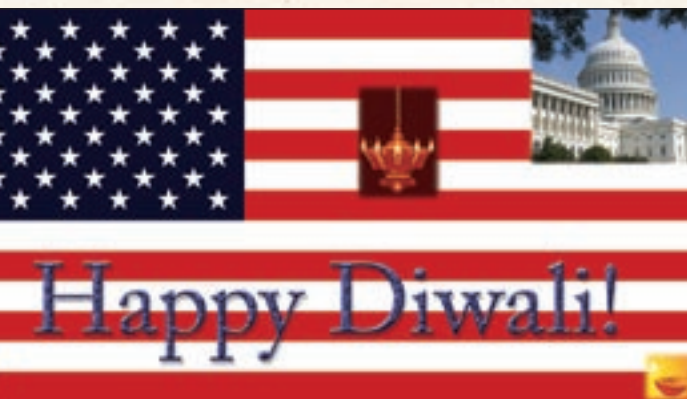
## Meditation—From India to U.S. Labs

A NOVEMBER 2007 ISSUE OF *Newsweek* magazine lauded the Beatles as being instrumental in bringing the Hindu teachings of meditation to the West through the promotion of Mahesh Yogi's Transcendental Meditation (TM). Many Buddhist monks and other Hindu swamis were also instrumental in bringing meditation to the mainstream. The point of the story: after several decades, the scientific study of meditation and its benefits is no longer a fringe affair tainted with the



In the 70s, Maharishi leads the Beatles, Mia Farrow and Donovan in meditation

reputation of pseudo-science. It has evolved into a rigorous exploration of the mind of man in some of the best labs in the country. The bottom line: meditation does change your brain. The practice is now medically prescribed for pain, depression and other disorders.



USA

## Diwali Passes US Senate

SENATE RESOLUTION 299, recognizing the "religious and historical significance of the festival of Diwali," passed unanimously on November 14, 2007 in the US Senate. Nearly identical to Resolution 747 that passed in the House of

Representatives on October 29, 2007, the Senate resolution was introduced by Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ) and co-sponsored by Senators Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), Carl Levin (D-MI), Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Robert Casey (D-PA). The two resolutions, written with the input of the Hindu American Foundation, recognized Diwali as a popular festival celebrated by Hindus, Jains and Sikhs.

THE CARIBBEAN

## Rare Event in Guadeloupe

ON DECEMBER 22, 2007, the Chingan family officially installed five murtis in a small, new temple in Le Moule, Guadeloupe. After a two-mile procession in chariots on a flower-strewn road, each of the

five Deities received a puja by a different priest. In this beautiful five-island nation of under half a million, and just 9 percent ethnic Indians, the event was a sign of hope and strength for dharma. Where Hinduism has had a very narrow foothold amidst centuries of French European culture—and now modernization and tourism—the charming shrine offers a new anchor for the next generation.



Temple built by the Chingan family opens in Guadeloupe





**F**OR UNEXPECTED WONDERS OF HINDU imagery in a modern context, it would be hard to top the 70-foot-long sculptural display of “Churning the Milk Ocean” story from the *Ramayana* at Suvarnabhoomi airport in Bangkok. An awesome surprise for

visitors, exquisitely executed life-sized devas and asuras hold the serpent that spins the churning Mt. Mandara and tortoise with Lord Vishnu on top. The display is a striking reminder of how deeply Hindu culture permeates the nations of South Asia.

THAILAND

## Churning the Ocean At Bangkok Airport

## BRIEFLY...

**DOW JONES HAS LAUNCHED NEW** “dharma indexes” to track the stocks of companies that observe the values of dharma-based religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism. Dharma Investments, a private faith-based Indian firm, partnered with Dow Jones to create the indexes.

**GOOGLE EXECUTIVE DR. LARRY** Brilliant (Subramanyam) says his guru, renowned *siddha*

Neem Karoli Baba, gave him the spark to make a difference. After several decades of work in various humanitarian capacities, Dr. Brilliant has been chosen to coordinate Google.org’s philanthropic initiatives, using one percent of the firm’s equity, annual profits and employees’ time.

**THIRTY PERCENT OF AMERICANS** now opt for cremation—up

from next to none 30 years ago. A 2003 Harris poll reported that 40% of people aged 25 to 29 believe they will reincarnate after they die. Stephen Prothero, a religion professor at Boston University, correlates the trend to a waning of belief in physical resurrection among Christians. He says, “Americans are becoming more Hindu.”

**THE END OF THE LAST HINDU** kingdom is imminent, with the December 2007 vote of Nepal’s provisional parliament to abolish the monarchy

and turn Nepal into a federal democratic republican state.

**CHRISTIAN INSTITUTIONS TOPPED** the list of NGOs operating in India in 2007. India’s Ministry of Home Affairs annual report, “Receipt of Foreign Contributions by Voluntary Associations,” shows that of the 15 top agencies who received a total of <sup>US\$</sup>336,218,421 sent to India, eight are Christian, with \$21 million for maintenance of Christian clergy and staff. Seven are secular and none are Hindu.



HINDUISM TODAY was founded on January 5, 1979, by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami (1927–2001). It is a nonprofit educational activity of Himalayan Academy, with the following purposes: 1. To foster Hindu solidarity as a unity in diversity among all sects and lineages; 2. To inform and inspire Hindus worldwide and people interested in Hinduism; 3. To dispel myths, illusions and misinformation about Hinduism; 4. To protect, preserve and promote the sacred *Vedas* and the Hindu religion; 5. To nurture and monitor the ongoing spiritual Hindu renaissance; 6. To publish resources for Hindu leaders and educators who promote Sanatana Dharma. Join this *seva* by sending letters, clippings, photographs, reports on events and by encouraging others.



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IN MY OPINION

## Our Hindu-Jewish Romance

A few of the reasons why Jews and Hindus enjoy a unique camaraderie in this pluralistic world

BY DR. NATHAN KATZ

**H**INDUS AND JEWS LOVE each other. We all know that. This does not mean that we love our Christian, Muslim, Buddhist or secular neighbors any the less, but we Jews and Hindus have an instinctual simpatico. I will explain why this is the case.

First, Jews have lived freely in India for perhaps two thousand years. When the Cochin Synagogue celebrated its four hundredth anniversary in 1968, it was a major news event in India. Hindus pride themselves on tolerance, and India’s unique position as the only nation in the world with no anti-Semitism reinforces this cherished self-perception. When Jews come to learn that some of us have lived freely, peacefully and creatively for so long in India, we are surprised and delighted, and we admire Hinduism as the only civilization immune to Jew-hatred. We learn that anti-Semitism is not universal, and that it is possible to preserve Jewish identity and religion in the absence of persecution. For this, we feel deep gratitude.

Second, ours are the two oldest religions in the world. Judaism is the mother of the younger faiths of Christianity and Islam, just as Hinduism is the source of Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism. Our ancient religions have sacred languages, Sanskrit and Hebrew, and hereditary priesthoods, brahmins and kohanim. We have dietary codes, we purify ourselves in special tanks, and our brides circle their husbands seven times. The ritual parallels seem endless.

The Hindu American community, like the Jewish American community, is enriched by internal pluralism, each group comprising both traditional and secularized people. We encourage our liberals to collaborate, and at the same time we are pleased by inter-religious cooperation between swamis and rabbis.

Both Hinduism and Judaism are non-proselytizing faiths, so we find it difficult to understand those who target us for conversion.



We are sensitive about monotheistic zealots who besmirch our religions, and we work together to strive against such defamation. In America, Jews are “elder brothers” of Hindus; as such, we instinctively jump to defend a Hindu community’s plans to build a temple when, as is sometimes the case, local folk object. Jews believe that our freedom of religion is best protected by ensuring that all religious minorities enjoy this same right.

On the traditional side, leading rabbis and swamis recently overcame one thorny issue that has stood in the way of our mutual affection. For the past 1,500 years or more, what in English is called “idolatry” has clouded Jewish perceptions of Hinduism. Happily, this issue may have been resolved once and for all at a February 2007 dialogue in New Delhi between members of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, a body which speaks with authority in the Jewish world, and the Dharma Acharya Sabha, a similarly august Hindu group. Led respectively by Rabbi Yona Metzger and Swami Dayananda Saraswati, the rabbis and the swamis issued a nine-point statement of principles, the first of which removed the “idolatry” issue from the table: “Their respective Traditions teach that there is One Supreme Being who is the Ultimate Reality, who has created this world in its blessed diversity and who has communicated Divine ways of action for humanity, for different peoples in different times and places.” This acknowledgement by credible rabbis and swamis that the same G-d is the source of their two faiths is a major step forward for our relationship, enabling our traditionally religious members to join our secular ones in this symbiosis of mutual support and enrichment.

The poet asks, “How do I love thee?” We Hindus and Jews count many ways indeed.

DR. NATHAN KATZ is a professor of religious studies at Florida International University and author of *Who are the Jews of India?*



# Four Ways We View the World

Meditative, philosophic, scientific and supramundane are dynamic perspectives we can employ every day

BY SATGURU BODHINATHA VEYLANSWAMI



IN HIS MYSTICAL LANGUAGE OF MEDITATION, CALLED Shum (pronounced *shoom*), my Gurudeva, Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, brought forth a unique insight: four perspectives through which people look at the world. While this is a bit more esoteric and abstract than most Publisher's Desk subjects, I think you will find it interesting and useful. Let me introduce you to these varied ways you can view the cosmos.

**1. Shumif:** The first perspective is shumif (*shoomeeff*), simply defined as awareness flowing through the mind, the mind itself being unmoved. This is the perspective we hold in meditation. Awareness, our identity, is a traveler, able to move freely about, investigating various areas of the mind, like a visitor to the various regions of the United States. If he wants to experience San Francisco, he travels there. If he wants to see Denver, which is much different from San Francisco, he travels there. He is moving, and the cities are stationary. Similarly, in the shumif perspective your awareness is the traveler in the mind, and the various parts of the mind—emotion, thought, intuition—are stationary. One of the goals of meditation is to increase your ability to move freely and at will.

In our ordinary way of thinking and speaking, if we are upset we complain, "I'm upset. That's the way I am. After a while, I probably will be calm again." But from the shumif perspective we say, "My awareness has ended up in the area of the mind that is always upset. Do I want to be here or not? No, this is ruining my day!" So, we affirm, "OK, I don't want to be here," and we apply certain tools for moving to an area of mind that is more wholesome and pleasant. But first we have to have the concept that we can move—that it is within our power to change where we are in the

mind. Similarly, if a visitor to the Mojave Desert decides, "It's too hot here for me," he knows he can simply move on.

**2. Simnif:** The second perspective is called simnif (*simneeff*). From this vantage point, the mind is moving, and the intelligence of the person observing remains stationary. Looking through a microscope at a drop of water, what do we see? Movement. You see many different things in motion. You are the stationary observer, and what you see is moving. You are stationary when looking into an ocean and seeing schools of fish moving here and there. That is the perspective of science or any field of knowledge based on the observation of matter. These first two cosmic points of view, shumif and simnif, are exactly opposite.

**3. Mulif:** The third perspective, mulif (*mooleeff*), is philosophical, metaphysical and psychological. Gurudeva gave the following description: "Mulif is the way of words, the way of the scholars of philosophical intellect. It is the perspective of some of the religions of the world. It is the perspective that all realization, all understanding, is worked out within and among people and their minds. In this perspective, one is unaware of the Gods, the three perfections of Lord Siva, the existence of beings on other planets, spacecraft. It is more of a subjective, intellectual perspective as to the nature of the universe, God and man. Realization is often attained in mulif through simply understanding deep philosophical concepts. This would be an intellectual realization, not a spiritual one."

For example, we may talk about the absolute perfection of God—Parasiva or Parabrahman—as timeless, causeless and spaceless. To know and understand such a truth is good philosophy, but it is not the same as experiencing it. To make that distinction is important.

Experiencing it is in the shumif perspective. Describing it is in the mulif perspective. Mulif is necessary, philosophy is necessary, because we have to understand intellectually what it is we are trying to experience; but we don't want to accept the concept as the experience itself. As Sage Yogaswami once admonished a scholarly disciple, "It is not in books, you fool."

**4. Dimfi:** The fourth, dimfi (*deemfee*), is the perspective of space or worlds—inner worlds and outer worlds. Our most common use of dimfi in Hindu practice is in our worship of the Deities in the temple. The Deities abide in the inner worlds. This is the vantage point of theism. The Deity is separate from us; the Deity is greater than we are. Through prayer, we draw forth the blessings of the Deity. That is the spirit of temple worship. It is, as Gurudeva explains, "the focus or consciousness that acknowledges, understands and communicates with God and Gods, beings on the astral plane, people from other planets. It is here that all psychic phenomena take place and the mind is open to all kinds of possibilities, of the extraterrestrial, out-of-body experiences, etc. Here reincarnation is understood. Mulif and dimfi are exactly opposite."

These four major perspectives create what Gurudeva once called one's "inner mind styling." Many people live in just one of them their entire life without realizing it. An experienced meditator, however, can learn to consciously live in two, three or more at the same time. How can we relate these viewpoints to everyday life? Let's take a common problem—depression—and look at how a Hindu devotee might alleviate it from each of these approaches.

The simnif, or scientific, perspective is often favored. We solve our sorrows by taking an anti-depressant drug, such as Prozac, to chemically alter our mood. The chemistry of medical science is our way out. It sounds dubious, but that's what's going on in the world. Even young children are being put on these medications. In severe cases, drugs may be necessary, but they do have side effects and don't come without an overhead, shall we say. However, simnif can be used positively for changing one's state of mind: applying the wisdom of ayurveda, exercising more, performing hatha yoga and improving one's diet.

Discussing the depression with a friend, counselor or psychologist is the solution from the mulif, or psychological, perspective. The counselor tries to talk someone into feeling better about themselves, talk them out of the problem, help them gain a new understanding. A professional counselor might advise, "You are a wonderful, divine being! You are perfect. Every experience is a good experience if you learn something from it."

Going to the temple for relief is the dimfi, inner-plane, approach. It's not commonly prescribed for depression, but it should be—going to the temple and placing your problems at the Feet of the Deity. We bring offerings, talk to the Deity about our unhappiness and go through a deep, inner process, just as if we were talking to a person in this physical world. But we receive blessings from the Deity, if we open ourselves in the right way. A force is awakened which you don't get from a person—a blast of divine energy that helps remove the problem. Sometimes, if it works out well, you may go away not even remembering what the problem was. That's a sign of success.

Alleviating depression through meditation is the shumif, or meditative, approach, moving awareness into a happier state of mind, then looking back and cognizing the karmas involved. This is the most advanced method, because the hardest time to meditate is when we're upset, sad or bothered. Still, it can be done.

Oftentimes you can use more than one perspective to help someone out of a slump. Start with mulif to improve the person's mood, reminding him he is a divine being. Listen closely and empathize with his situation, while trying to give him an overview. Then you can move on to dimfi. Recommend that he go into the temple or shrine room and talk to Ganesha about it, place the matter at His Feet and beseech the Mighty One to adjust his emotional state. If he is a good meditator, you can suggest that he then sit down and meditate: "Go into the energies in the spine and become positive again. That powerful spiritual energy is right there within you, and you know how to access it." He may also benefit by getting more fresh air and exercise. In this way, you can use all four perspectives to uplift him.

We try to avoid the all-too-frequent simnif approach of prescribing drugs for depression. A devotee whose spouse recently passed away at a young age told me, "I've been advised by a doctor that I'm depressed because of my grief and should take some drugs." My goodness! Drugs have become a panacea, but grieving is a natural process common to all cultures, because it takes time, often a year or more, to recover from the shock. Rather than confusing grief with depression and taking a drug to make it go away, the better approach is to follow the wisdom of ayurveda, talk about the problem to gain a proper philosophical perspective, beseech divine beings for blessings and change your consciousness through the use of your will.

Explore these four ways of looking at the universe. They hold the ability to enrich and broaden your life experiences.

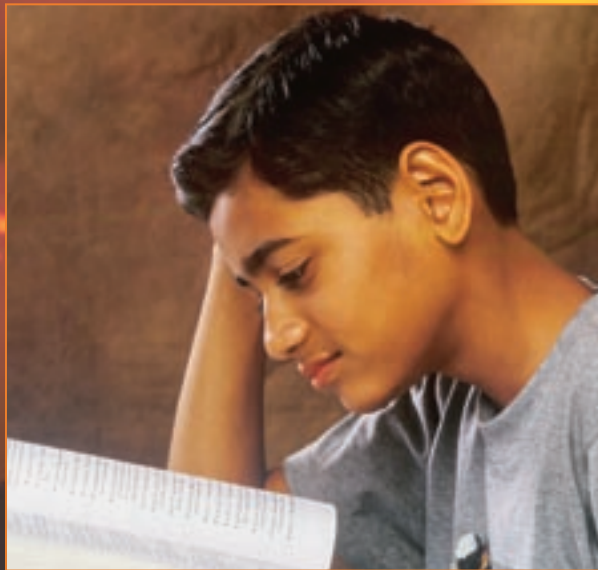
Four modes of the mind: Meditative (awareness moving through the mind), scientific (awareness is stationary, observing movement in nature), philosophic (study and understanding), supramundane (cognizance of inner and outer worlds beyond the mundane, such as the world of the Gods)



Shumif, the meditative perspective



Simnif, the perspective of science or observation



Mulif, the philosophical perspective



Dimfi, the perspective of inner and outer dimensions



## LETTERS

### Please Answer our Questions

I AM A NEW SUBSCRIBER TO YOUR MAGAZINE, and I love your content. I do think that Archit Kumar made a great point: we need to spell out clearly what it means to be a Hindu (“Message to My Elders,” Jan/Feb/Mar, 2008). A lot of non-Hindus and Hindus know about our temples, our *murtis*, etc., but I believe it is time we talk about our values. Each and every faith teaches values to its followers, and I think Hindu values are unique. I urge HINDUISM TODAY and its readers to define a set of Hindu values.

Hinduism is a tolerant, democratic faith. Take a look at the different paths Pakistan and India took after independence, the only major difference being religion. The only major religion to bow to a female form of God is Hinduism. How can one forget that famous scene in the movie “Gandhi” when Gandhi implored a Hindu to bring up a Muslim child as a Muslim. Imagine that! One can bet that no one of another faith would do that. Other faiths, like Christianity, have reduced God to a minority God, a tiny god who is only interested in “His flock.” Hell to anyone who thinks otherwise. A pious, good person is denied entrance to heaven because he is of the wrong faith. Contrast the idea of a God who runs a segregated heaven with the Hindu view, wherein even an atheist is welcomed into heaven! Consequently we see that houses of prayer in Christianity and Islam are heavily segregated! Whereas for Hindus, all temples are our temples, and there are no “their” temples. Hindus who have converted to other faiths tend to malign and abuse their former faith, whereas no Hindu convert has ever mocked his former faith. There is simply no encouragement to do so. Let’s take these astounding and beautiful values, number them and make them a set of rules for Hindus to follow.

VANAMALI THOTAPALLI  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, USA  
✉ [MALIPALLI@YAHOO.COM](mailto:MALIPALLI@YAHOO.COM)

I FULLY SHARE THE CONCERNS ARCHIT Kumar expressed, and I agree with his ideas to further Hindu dharmic causes. Our future generations will at some point sorely miss having their religious/cultural identity and will lament that we did not do our duty. With this in mind, we at Arsha Bodha Center in New Jersey are offering an academic-style Hindu Dharma Course. The course is prepared under the guidance of Swami Tatadmananda and taught by senior students of the Center. The purpose of the course is to give adults and youth a fairly broad and accurate background of Hindu Dharma and to clear some of the common misconceptions. The ultimate goal is to impress upon the students that they are attend-

ing this course as teacher-trainees and that they should do their part by teaching others, children and adults alike. We offer to conduct similar courses in other communities in the US.

KISHIN J. KRIPALANI  
BRIDGEWATER, NEW JERSEY, USA  
✉ [KRIPALANI@MSN.COM](mailto:KRIPALANI@MSN.COM)

### Why Support a Hindu Temple?

SINCE THE DEDICATION OF THE GANESHA Temple in Queens, New York, and the groundbreaking for the Sri Venkateswara Temple in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, about 30 years ago, numerous Hindu temples have sprung up across America. At present, most major metropolitan areas, and even some smaller cities, have Hindu temples. With a few exceptions, the realization of these temples from concept to completion has been very slow, particularly in smaller cities. The primary reason temples come up so slowly is the scarcity of timely monetary support for a temple project.

Recently a niece of mine very affectionately asked me the question: “Uncle, tell me why I should give money to a temple project instead of to poor people who are in need of the essentials?” A legitimate, thoughtful question! I replied to her in simple terms: “By all means, give some to the poor people, because they need the money to buy food and comforts, whereas the rich can buy them and a lot more with their wealth. But also give some money for the temple project, because there are many challenges in life in facing which you can get piece of mind and strength only through spirituality and which no amount of money can buy! You see, everyone, regardless of their monetary wealth, needs spirituality, and that is why you should give some money to the temple project.” I was not sure whether she was satisfied with the answer, but she went away saying she would give some thought to it. Then, the Jan/Feb/Mar, 2008, issue of HINDUISM TODAY came to rescue me. It contained an article by Dr. Frank Morales on Sanatana Dharma (“An Infinity of Possibilities”), which I read with great interest. I was particularly struck by the last sentence, which said, “Vivekananda showed us that Sanatana Dharma is not merely the possession of India, but can be realized as the future pre-eminent world-view of the entire globe.” Also in the same issue is another very timely and articulate article, “Message to My Elders: Please answer our questions about Hinduism,” by 16-year-old eleventh-grade student Archit Kumar of Addison, Texas. In it, he writes, “Another important factor in the survival of Hinduism today is money. In this day and age, the world revolves around money. To be honest, we Hindus in America have plenty of it. We must invest this money

in the right causes at the right time.” Upon reading these articles, I said to myself: “Yes, this is it. The Hindu temple is the symbol of Sanatana Dharma, which is the essence of our heritage! The future is now! The right time is now!”

We invest our money in banks and stock markets for the sake of our younger generations. Consider the Hindu temple as a bank, the “Hindu Heritage Bank,” where the dividend is spirituality. I implore Hindus to invest some money in it to preserve our heritage for the sake of the younger generations of the present and the future. Its value can only grow continuously, whereas investment in a stock market can go up or down. When you give to a Hindu temple, you are investing for the benefit of the entire community, as compared to your personal investments, which are for the sake of your family alone. Let us contribute to realizing Sanatana Dharma as the “pre-eminent world-view of the entire globe” by providing education that answers questions posed by the younger generations, and by supporting Hindu temple projects in our communities in a timely manner.

NANNAPANENI NARAYANA RAO, PH. D.  
URBANA, ILLINOIS, USA  
✉ [NNRAO@AD.UTUC.EDU](mailto:NNRAO@AD.UTUC.EDU)

### What Is the Oldest Language?

IN HER SUNDAY COLUMN IN PARADE MAGAZINE, “Ask Marilyn” by Marilyn vos Savant (see [http://www.parade.com/articles/editions/2008/edition\\_01-27-2008/Ask\\_Marilyn](http://www.parade.com/articles/editions/2008/edition_01-27-2008/Ask_Marilyn)), Marilyn answered the question “What is the world’s oldest language” as follows: “Humans have been able to speak since roughly 100,000 B.C., but if languages were not written, they often disappeared without leaving evidence of their existence. The first written languages, which appeared around 3200 B.C., were Egyptian and Sumerian. The earliest written languages that still survive are Chinese and Greek. In written form, they date back to about 1500 B.C.” As I understand it, HINDUISM TODAY contributing scholars contend that the oldest portion of the *Vedas* may date back as far as 6000 BCE. Isn’t Sanskrit (which is still spoken) the oldest known surviving language, or are there languages even older? In your opinion, does Marilyn owe us a retraction?

SADHUNATHAN NADESAN  
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA, USA  
✉ [SADHU@NADESAN.ORG](mailto:SADHU@NADESAN.ORG)

✓ *Contemporary researchers, such as Dr. B.G. Siddharth of B.M. Birla Science Centre, Dr. S.B. Roy, Professor Subhash Kak, Dr. N.R. Waradpande, Bhagwan Singh and Dr. David Frawley, have developed a much earlier picture of India than is conventionally understood, assembling new chronolo-*

*gies based on dating scriptural references by their relationship to the known precession of the equinoxes. Earth’s axis of rotation “wobbles,” causing constellations, as viewed from Earth, to drift at a constant rate and along a predictable course over a 26,000-year cycle. For example, a verse in the Rig Veda gives an astronomical fact that can be correlated to around 6500 BCE. In Gods, Sages and Kings, Frawley states, “Precessional changes are the hallmark of Hindu astronomy. We cannot ignore them in ancient texts just because they give us dates too early for our conventional view of human history.” Besides such references from scripture, there is other evidence to support these scholars’ dates, such as carbon-14 dating, the discovery of Indus-Sarasvati Valley cities and the recent locating of the Sarasvati River, a prominent landmark of Vedic writings. For much of its history, Sanskrit was purely a spoken language, and knowledge was passed down orally from generation to generation. We do not yet know of any way to date the development of written Sanskrit. Though Marilyn vos Savant missed the mark identifying the world’s oldest language, she may be correct about the world’s oldest written languages.*

### Not Enough Hinduism Online

I CAME ACROSS YOUR WEBSITE A FEW months back and subscribed to HINDUISM TODAY. I recently read the Oct/Nov/Dec, 2007, issue, featuring Lord Murugan’s Six Temple Pilgrimage. I am an ardent devotee of Lord Shiva and Lord Muruga. It is nice to

see the work done by your magazine. I often feel there is not enough about Hinduism and temples on the Internet. The traditions and their deep meaning must be online, since the Internet is now looked to by almost everyone for information. I am happy to see you are working in this direction.

SHANMUGA PRIYA VENKATARAJAN  
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA, USA  
✉ [PRIAVENKAT@GMAIL.COM](mailto:PRIAVENKAT@GMAIL.COM)

### In Praise of Hinduism Today

One of your readers put me in touch with your magazine when he read a reference to a blog written by me in “Diaspora: Zed Gives Historic First-Ever Hindu Prayer in the US Senate” (Oct/Nov/Dec, 2007). I then downloaded the issue and was amazed to find the depth and variety of your coverage. The highlights of HINDUISM TODAY are its bright, colorful images, contemporary news, expert opinions and in-depth articles. The lead article of the issue is the pilgrimage to the six renowned temples of Lord Murugan, and the cover appropriately is a painting of Lord Murugan serenely astride his *vahana*, the peacock. The ten-page feature on Hindu music is a must for lovers of Indian music. The article traces the origin of music from the *Sama Veda* to the various forms of contemporary Indian classical music. I find special empathy with Dr. Karan Singh’s view on the interfaith movement. Dr. Singh is from the vanishing breed of erudite luminaries who have contributed wholeheartedly to the development of both Hinduism and India. HINDUISM TODAY reflects the

full diversity of Hinduism from theology to culture. Every reader will find articles that interest him or her. I am sold on the magazine, and I was compelled to record my joy and appreciation of the effort you are putting into this venture.

HARSH NEVATIA  
MUMBAI, INDIA  
✉ [HINDUISM@SUITE101.COM](mailto:HINDUISM@SUITE101.COM)

ONCE YOU HAVE READ HINDUISM TODAY you cannot stop reading it, and hence I do not want my subscription to discontinue. I am glad I have a lifetime subscription.

C.S. PITCHUMONI  
SOMERSET, NEW JERSEY, USA  
✉ [PITCHUMONI@HOTMAIL.COM](mailto:PITCHUMONI@HOTMAIL.COM)

I HAVE BEEN READING YOUR ONLINE VERSION OF HINDUISM TODAY, and I wish to compliment and congratulate all those involved in producing this excellent and informative magazine.

RAJDEV THOTA  
STANGER, KWAZULU NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA  
✉ [RAJTHO@WEBMAIL.CO.ZA](mailto:RAJTHO@WEBMAIL.CO.ZA)

Letters with writer’s name, address and daytime phone number should be sent to:

**Letters, Hinduism Today**  
107 Kaholalele Road  
Kapaa, Hawaii, 96746-9304 USA  
or faxed to: (808) 822-4351  
or e-mailed to: [letters@hindu.org](mailto:letters@hindu.org)

Letters may be edited for space and clarity and may appear in electronic versions of HINDUISM TODAY.  
✉ INDICATES LETTERS RECEIVED VIA E-MAIL

## Uplifting Yourself, the Kids & the World

### Spiritual tools you can use—and help develop

LITTLE DHEEPA MATURI ATTENDED schools in a small town, USA, where there were few Hindus. And even though her parents had prepared her well, it was quite a challenge. “It wasn’t so much a conflict of faiths or cultures, and the people were nice enough,” Dheepa explains. “What was tough was to be alone in a sea of misunderstandings, misinformation and ignorance about Hindus and Hinduism. Every day I had to find endless strength from within myself to not be overwhelmed. I had to constantly reestablish my beliefs and convictions and keep promising myself never to let go.”

When HINDUISM TODAY entered her life, it brought the support she was looking for. “The magazine gave me the vocabulary, clarity and deeper understanding I craved. But even more strengthening was

that it said to me, ‘Yes, there is a worldwide Hinduism, and Hindus everywhere face their own trying times.’ I felt powerfully uplifted. I was no longer alone!”

Dheepa eventually became an attorney, and when her first son, Vikas, was born, she was struck with the thought that it was now her awesome responsibility to prepare this new human being to face his own destiny. She would need more clarity than ever to successfully pass on to him the accurate perspectives and precious wisdom he would need. Vikas is now 9 and has an 8-year-old brother, Jay. “HINDUISM TODAY has continued to give us the tools to teach them, and they are responding better than we ever dreamed. We are grateful.”

Dheepa and her husband Raj have given \$3,000 to the Hinduism Today Production Fund, which is a part of the



**“The more we understand, the better we can prepare them for the road ahead.”**  
*Raj, Dheepa and the next generation.*

Hindu Heritage Endowment. “We want HINDUISM TODAY to always have abundant means to keep those treasures coming. We need the support. The world needs the support.” Please consider donating to the Hinduism Today Production Fund. Contact us and ask for the Hinduism Today Production Fund flyer. [www.hinduismtoday.com](http://www.hinduismtoday.com) [www.hheonline.org/ht/plannedgiving/](http://www.hheonline.org/ht/plannedgiving/) [hhe@hindu.org](mailto:hhe@hindu.org) • 808-822-3012 ext.244



## QUOTES & QUIPS

### Say it with pride: “We are Hindus!”

Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902)

He who befriends a man whose conduct is vicious, whose vision impure, and who is notoriously crooked, is rapidly ruined.

**Chanakya** (350-275 BCE), *Indian politician, strategist and writer*

In the *Vedas* I have found eternal compensation, unfathomable power, unbroken peace. **Ralph Waldo Emerson** (1803-1882), *American philosopher, lecturer and writer*

If swimming is so good for your figure, how do you explain whales? *Anonymous*

I am one with the universe—on a scale from one to ten. *Anonymous*

India has so far demonstrated the capacity to weave together two threads, one an original, primeval, timeless and almost immutable line, and the other a thread of dynamism and change. In India nothing

is static. Tradition pulsates with life, while change dances with the ancient.

**Kapila Vatsyayan**, *Indian scholar of classical dance, art and architecture, founder of the Indian National Centre of the Arts*

*Ex oriente lux* (Light from the East) may still be the motto of scholars, for the Western world has not yet derived from the East all the light it freely gives. **Henry David Thoreau** (1817-1862), *American poet, philosopher and writer*

One should go beyond relative knowledge and abide in the Self. Your own Self-realization is the greatest service you can render the world. Seek the seeker. **Ramana Maharishi** (1879-1950), *South Indian mystic*

There is not a fellow under the sun who is my disciple. On the contrary, I am

everybody's disciple. All are the children of God. All are His servants. As for me, I consider myself as a speck of the dust of the devotee's feet. **Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa** (1836-1886)

I felt great need of a holy pilgrimage, so I sat still for three days and God came to me. **Saint Kabir** (1440-1518)

Hey! Who are you? **Chellapaswami** (1840-1915), *Natha siddha guru of Sri Lanka, who with these words propelled his young disciple on an irresistible quest for his formless True Self. The disciple would later become Satguru Yogaswami.*

In thinking “This is I” and “That is mine” one binds himself with himself, as does a bird with a snare. **Krishna Yajur Veda**, *Maitreya Upanishad 3.2*

Heaven on Earth is a choice you must make, not a place you must find. **Wayne Dyer**, *American author and humanist*

Speaking cruel words is like sharpening a boomerang. *Anonymous*

When I came out of the spacecraft (Discovery) for a space walk, I had this feeling that Ganesha was looking over me. **Sunita Williams**, *astronaut, the second Indian-American to orbit the Earth*

The whole world is your school. See that all are you. You are the commander. You are the Commander-in-Chief! All are commanders; there is no greater or lesser. All are God. God sees God, God talks to God. **Satguru Yogaswami** (1872-1964), *Sri Lanka's most revered contemporary mystic*

Hinduism is the most skeptical and the

Frank and Ernest

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most believing of all religions. The most skeptical because it has questioned and experimented the most and the deepest, rejecting nothing but insisting on testing and experiencing everything. From this comes our scriptures and our beliefs: the *Vedas*, the Vedanta, the *Gita*, the *Upanishads*... But the most authoritative scripture is in the heart, where the Eternal has His dwelling.

**Sri Aurobindo Ghose** (1872-1950), *Indian mystic and philosopher*

In democracy it's your vote that counts. In feudalism, it's your count that votes. *Anonymous*

Originality is the fine art of remembering what you hear but forgetting where you heard it. **Laurence J. Peter** (1919-1990), *American educator*

I was gratified to be able to answer promptly, and I did. I said I didn't know. **Mark Twain** (1835-1910), *American writer, humorist and humanist*

You must not let your life run in the ordinary way; do something that nobody else has done, something that will dazzle the world. Show that God's creative principle works in you. **Paramahansa Yogananda** (1893-1952), *founder of Self Realization Fellowship*

I had amnesia once or twice. *Anonymous*

The intellect strengthened with opinionated knowledge is the only barrier to the superconscious. A mystic generally does not talk very much, for his intuition works through reason, but does not use the processes of reason. Any intuitive breakthrough will be quite reasonable, but it does not use the processes of reason. Reason takes time. Superconsciousness acts in the now. All superconscious knowing comes in a flash, out of the nowhere. Intuition is more direct than reason, and far more accurate. **Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami** (1927-2001), *founder of HINDUISM TODAY*

#### DID YOU KNOW?

### The Truth of the Mystics

**M**YSTICS ARE THOSE WHO DIVE deeply in search of the Divine, seeking personal experience, realization and insight. In Hinduism, they are looked upon as our greatest living leaders—the gurus, saints and sadhus of Sanatana Dharma. Other religions also have such illumined individuals, often as members of small, peripheral denominations, such as the Muslim Sufis or the Jewish Kabbalists. Some of their discoveries are astoundingly akin to Hindu ancient wisdom.

The Jewish Neo-Hasidic mystical movement recently concluded that God used God's Self to form the universe, a

view called panentheism. Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi wrote in his 2003 book, *Wrapped In a Holy Flame*: “We are mostly in a shift to the conclusion that everything is God. It is only from the human perspective that we see a difference between holy bread and dirt. On the sub molecular level, on the atomic level, they all look the same. And if you look from a galactic perspective, what difference is there? We are not so far advanced yet that we can explain all these things, but deep down, the deepest level is that God is everything.”



#### BASICS OF HINDUISM

### Ahimsa

**T**HE RISHIS WHO REVEALED THE principles of dharma in Hindu scripture knew full well the potential of human life for entangling itself in suffering and the path which could avert it. They explained that one spiritual force flows in and through all things in this universe, conferring existence by its power. According to their ancient wisdom, life is a coherent process leading all souls without exception to enlightenment, and no violence will be carried to that ascent. Sages re-taught a philosophy of non-difference of self and other, asserting that in the final analysis we are not separate from the

world nor from the Divine which shines forth in all things and all peoples. From this understanding of oneness arose the philosophical basis for the practice of *ahimsa*, noninjury, and Hinduism's ancient commitment to it.

Sage Vyasa defines ahimsa as “the absence of injuriousness toward all living beings in all respects and for all times.” He said that a person engaged in the true practice of ahimsa would be freed from all enmity. Rishi Patanjali, revered author of the *Yoga Sutras*, regarded ahimsa as the yogi's *mahavrata*, the great vow and foremost spiritual discipline of those seeking Truth.





# Finally, a Fair and Accurate Presentation of Hindu History for Children

## A 16-page sixth-grade social studies lesson from the editors of Hinduism Today

Hinduism Today's 16-page Hindu history lesson is both correct and authentic, and definitely better than I have seen in any school textbook. If each Hindu were to learn and remember this narrative, the Hindu community would be better off in this increasingly pluralistic society.

Shiva G. Bajpai, Ph.D Director, Center for Asian Studies, California State University

This lesson corrects many of the errors in the current chapters on Hinduism, presents the religion in a sympathetic light and describes the religion in the way Hindus understand and practice it. The lesson is a commendable attempt that is acceptable to nearly all in our religion.

C.K. Hiranya Gowda, M.D., Former President, Hindu Temple of Nashville, TN, USA

While no document can possibly encompass fully the breadth, complexity and plurality of Hindu practice and belief, the Hindu American Foundation finds that this work compromises little in describing the universal ideals of Hinduism that have emerged from its wondrous diversity.

Hindu American Foundation, USA



This is the most comprehensive summary of Hinduism's multi-faceted tradition that I have seen to date. I wholeheartedly and unequivocally recommend its use in all official textbooks for students.

Swami Chidanand Saraswati, Founder & Chairman, India Heritage Research Foundation, Rishikesh

This presentation provides a needed counterbalance to textbooks on Hinduism which are sometimes inaccurate or fail to give a perspective that would be recognizable to most Hindus. Though designed for sixth-graders, I could imagine myself recommending these sections as review material for my college students.

Jeffery D. Long, Ph.D, Chair, Department of Religious Studies, Elizabethtown College, PA, USA



## FROM THE VEDAS

# As You Have Ever Been, Remain

## Tejobindu Upanishad describes One beyond duality and non-duality

TEJOBINDU IS THE 12TH OF THE 108 UPANISHADS and is attached to the Krishna Yajur Veda. It includes this esoteric explanation of union with Parabrahman, the absolute, when nothing is and nothing is not.

Rest assured that to say anything is not Atma is a misconception. There is no *manas* that is not Atma. There is no world that is not Atma. When all *sankalpas* (eras) are gone and all actions over, Brahman alone remains, and there is nothing that is not Atma. Being devoid of the three bodies, the three periods of time, the three gunas of *jiva*, the three pains and the three worlds, and following the saying "All is Brahman," know thee that there is nothing to be known in the absence of *chitta* (consciousness); there is no old age in the absence of body; no action in the absence of hands; no death in the absence of creatures. There is no virtue, no purity, no fear, no repetition of mantras, no guru nor any disciple. There is no second in the absence of one. Where the second is not, even the first disappears.

Where there is Truth alone, there is no non-Truth possible; where there is non-Truth alone, there is no Truth possible. Auspiciousness is desired only if something inauspicious exists. If you regard fear and not-fear, then fear will arise out of not-fear. If bondage should become emancipation, then in the absence of bondage there will be no emancipation. If birth should imply death, then in the absence of birth, there is no death. If "thou" implies "I," then in the absence of "thou" there is no "I." If the concept of "this" creates the idea of "that," then "this" does not exist in the absence of a way to indicate "that." If being should imply non-being, then non-being will imply being. If an effect implies a cause, then in the absence of effect, there is no cause. If duality implies non-duality, then in the absence of duality there is no non-duality. For anything to be seen, there is the faculty of sight; in the absence of the seen, there is no sight. In the absence of any interior, there is no exterior. If there should be fullness, only then is non-fullness possible.

Therefore, all of this exists nowhere. Neither you nor I, nor this nor these exist. There exists no object of comparison in the True One. There is nothing like or unlike the Unborn. There is no mind to think. I am the supreme Brahman. This world is Brahman only. Thou and I are Brahman only.

I am Chinmatra simply, and there is nothing that is not the Atma. This is certain. This universe is not. This universe is not at all. It was nowhere produced and stays nowhere. Some say that *chitta* is the universe. No, it does not exist. Neither the universe nor *chitta* nor *ahankara* nor *jiva* exists. Neither the creations of Maya, nor Maya itself really exists. Fear does not exist. Actor, action, hearing, thinking, the two samadhis, the measurer, the measure, *ajnana* (ignorance) and *aviveka* (confusion)—none of these exists anywhere.

Therefore the four moving considerations and the three kinds of relationship do not exist. There is no Ganga, no Gaya, no Setu, no elements or anything else, no earth, water, fire, *vayu* (wind), or akasha



Being beyond being: For the meditator immersed in supreme consciousness, all wisdom and ignorance, all imperfections and perfections, all illusions and non-illusions, all existence and non-existence are revealed as Himself

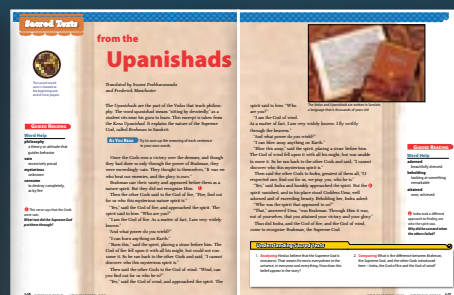
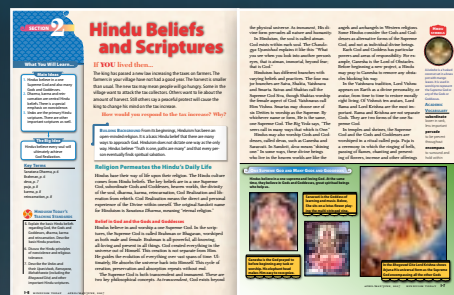
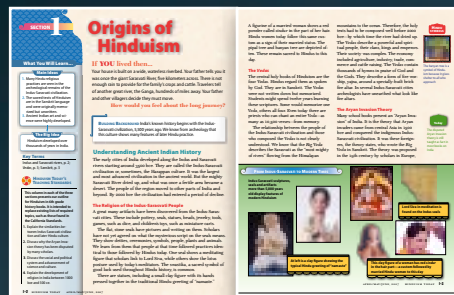
anywhere; no Devas, no guardians of the four quarters, no Vedas, no Guru, no distance, no proximity, no time, no middle, no non-duality, no truth, no untruth, no bondage, no emancipation, no *Sat*, no *asat*, no happiness, no class, no motion, no caste, and no worldly business. All is I; all is Brahman only and nothing else.

There exists, thus, nothing such as "consciousness alone is;" there is, at that point, no saying such as "Chit is I." The statement "I am Brahman" does not exist when one is Brahman; nor does exist the statement "I am the eternally pure." Whatever is uttered by the mouth, whatever is thought by *manas*, whatever is determined by *buddhi*, whatever is cognized by *chitta*—all these do not exist. There is no yogi or yoga when one is Brahman. All are and are not. Neither day nor night, neither bathing nor contemplating, neither delusion nor non-delusion—these do not exist then.

O Yogi, hear that there is not an atom which thou dost not penetrate; but yet thou art without their semblance. Thou art devoid of existence and non-existence. Thou art changeless, without *kala* or *kashta* (divisions of time). Thou art immersed in the bliss of Self. There is nothing that thou seekest which is not thyself. Have no doubt, thou art I. Know there is nothing not-Atma.

K. NARAYANASVAMI AIYAR published this translation of Tejobindu Upanishad (slightly edited here) in 1914 along with the Adyar Library as part of his book, Thirty Minor Upanishads. The translation had previously appeared in the monthly journal, The Theosophist. He collaborated on the work with Sundara Sastri.

The Vedas are the divinely revealed and most revered scriptures, *shruti*, of Hinduism, likened to the Torah (1200 BCE), Bible New Testament (100 CE), Koran (630 CE) or Zend Avesta (600 BCE). Four in number, Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva, the Vedas include over 100,000 verses. Oldest portions may date back as far as 6500 BCE.



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SPECIAL FEATURE

# Shop India

**Join our Hinduism  
Today correspondent  
on a tour of the arts  
and crafts shops  
of fifteen states**

ALL PHOTOS: THOMAS KELLY







RAJIV MALIK, NEW DELHI  
**T**HE FINE INDIAN CRAFTS WHICH HINDU kings and queens in olden times ordered custom made—and received only months later—are available to you “off the shelf” at the State Emporia Complex in Connaught Place, New Delhi. This centrally located mall contains twenty-two state emporia lined up like beads on a string, half a kilometer long. Each is a branch of its state’s handicraft corporation and features that state’s traditional crafts and signature products. Museum-quality bronze Deity images and brass lamps from Tamil Nadu, silk saris and beautifully inlaid rosewood furniture from Karnataka, woolen shawls and intricately embroidered *dupattas* from Punjab, small portable home shrines and the famed tie-dyed saris from Gujarat—all these and much more are displayed in mind-boggling variety.

There is an immense variety of Hindu religious items in every store. These account for half of their annual sales—which run to tens of millions of dollars. Most popular by far—with Indians as well as the foreign tourists who frequent these shops in droves—are the statues, paintings and engravings of Lord Ganesha. The Maharashtra Emporium alone, famous throughout Delhi for its exquisite selection of the elephant-faced God, brings in truckloads of *murtis* every year for the Ganesha Chaturthi festival. Ganesha’s importance is also evident in the daily worship of His *murti* with coconuts, garlands, flowers and incense at nearly every store’s entrance. Ganesha and all the other Gods and Goddesses have been providing a liveli-

hood to hundreds of thousands of craftsmen in even the remotest parts of the country for thousands of years, and there is no sign this will ever change.

Rajiv Chandran, a New Delhi art lover and critic quoted throughout this article, shared this observation on Ganesha: “He, I think, is a very beautiful brand for the Indian handicrafts. Ganesha is immediately linked to our culture. He is a combination of *siddhi* and *buddhi*, success and intellect. There is a playfulness and childlike joy to Him, but at the same time there is great reverence for Him. Ganesha is a brand for India, and we have to explain the Ganesha brand to the world.

“You see,” Rajiv went on, “we have certain pan-Indian symbols; these are the threads which connect us. The sari is the first, worn from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. There may be variations in its form and color, but a sari is a sari and presents certain cultural values. Then there is the bindi of the women, the River Ganga and Lord Ganesha. These are the four symbols that unite India.”

Connaught Place has long been home to small state-sponsored emporia, but the present, highly focused complex was conceived in 1974 by the famed freedom fighter and craft lover Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya. Recently an adjacent block was added to accommodate nongovernmental organizations also engaged in the selling of craft items. Both the state and NGO emporia are subsidized by the government of India as well as by individual state governments. All work together to actively support India’s artisans, not only by providing retail outlets but by

setting up production centers and financing individual artisans. In this way employment is provided to hundreds of thousands of craftspeople throughout India. The state handicraft corporations maintain a network of stores throughout their state, and even in other states; but it is always their Delhi emporium that outsells every other store. It is here that NRIs and foreign tourists are most apt to do their major shopping in India, for here is the greatest selection. Whatever they can’t carry home by suitcase travels by sea or air cargo. Shipping services are provided by all emporia, a great convenience to the tourist, whose purchases quickly outstrip his baggage allowance.

In the emporia, one finds the arts and crafts of a vast culture extending thousands of years into the past, a tradition which de-



fines us as Indians and as Hindus. But the emporia face stiff competition from two sides: the nearby Dilli Haat complex, where craftsmen sell directly to the public at lower prices, and Delhi’s Western-style shopping malls which offer “modern” products. The latter is both an economic and cultural challenge. Rajiv Chandran observed, “What we are facing today is this dilemma of tradition and change. The question is how to get the youth involved. Today we have the first gen-

eration of Indians with a lot of spendable income. Some years ago they were running to get the latest cell phones and television sets. That phase is fast coming to an end, and people today want to know their roots. They want to know where they belong to and why they are different.”

Chandran explains that the various state emporia have evolved over the years as they carefully determined which of their traditional handicrafts have the best and most unique sales potential. The Northeastern States’ emporia focus on their exclusive bamboo products. Kerala has its wood and coir products and a wide range of elephants and lamps. Tamil Nadu also has lamps, besides the bronze statues. The Andhra Emporium specializes in beautiful *ikat* and *kalamkari*, cloths died in exquisite and traditional ways. Andhra and Karnataka emporia also have wooden toys. Every emporium has looked at how it can best represent its state.

#### Our Saga Begins

Accompanied by photographer Thomas Kelly, I set out with my wife Renu, daughter Palak, her friend and classmate Divya, my sister Suman Taneja and her daughter Aashta on an all-too-brief three-day tour of the complex. We all wished we could explore this shoppers’ paradise in more leisurely fashion. I must warn the reader that it is risky to one’s credit-card balance to enter the stores with so many family members! Each of us found at least one “must-buy” item in every store.

In planning our venture, we were fortunate to have the assistance of Mrs. V. Hema-

## Tamil Nadu

(counter clockwise from upper left) A museum-quality bronze Siva Nataraja on display (and for sale) at Poompuhar; the Tamil Nadu State Emporium; the Emporium’s storefront; pearl bangles; trying on an earring; Mrs. Hemalatha, store manager, surrounded by their brass lamp collection





latha, manager of Tamil Nadu Emporium. She not only gave us the full tour of her own store, but helped us identify six representative emporia and secured permission from their managers for our official visit and photo shoot. With her guidance, and wishing we had enough time to visit all twenty-two stores, we decided to explore the shops of six states—Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Orissa, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat and Punjab—plus Dilli Haat.

#### Poompuhar: Crafts for Kings

The moment you enter a store called Poompuhar, you are transported back in time. You find yourself surrounded by hundreds of beautiful shining brass lamps and bronze statues, Tamil Nadu's signature products. The small Ganesha shrine, right at the entrance, is decked with fresh flowers, garlands and lit incense sticks emitting an intoxicating fragrance that blends with the powerful scent of sandalwood emanating from various products made of that rare wood.

Manager V. Hemalatha explains the name: "Poompuhar was a fabled Chola seaport whence the crafts and the culture of the prosperous Tamil kingdom were shipped as far east as China and as far west as Europe." Sixteen Poompuhar emporia are run by the Tamil Nadu Handicrafts Development Corporation. The Delhi branch, established in 1973, specializes in brasswares, Thanjavur paintings and wood carvings.

Poompuhar sells about 50,000 lamps a year—over a hundred a day. Lamps make up 10 percent of total showroom sales. Most cost one to eighty dollars, but each year one or two huge ones are purchased for \$15,000.

The largest of these multi-branched, twelve-foot lamps are stored elsewhere and displayed in the store only by photographs. Ganesha, Lakshmi and Sarasvati lamps are used in worship. Other lamps are adorned with Nandi the bull, peacocks or elephants. Elaborately decorated hanging lamps are suspended by brass chains. Many of these lamps are typical South Indian temple items.

In addition to their use in temples and shrines, lamps are a vital part of daily Hindu life. Hemalatha tells us: "At the beginning of any official program, there is a traditional lamp lighting. For each and every occasion, the lamp is lit, whether it is a happy event or a sorrowful one. It is lit at a wedding, upon the birth of a child, and when someone passes away." Lamps are auspicious, driving away darkness and ignorance, and are harbingers of happiness and wealth. The Emporium's brass lamps figured strongly in the televised *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* series, visible in four out of five scenes.

Poompuhar is a major outfitter for Delhi's temples. The gold chariot for the Tirupati Balaji temple in Ramakrishna Puram came from here, as did the twenty-foot-tall doors. As a special order, Poompuhar cast the bronze Deity for the Mahalakshmi temple in Rajendra Nagar, Central Delhi.

Each of us was drawn to different items.



My sister Suman was fascinated with the sets of temple jewelry made of semi-precious stones, while my wife, Renu, was enthralled with the gold Thanjavur paintings with jewels embedded on the dresses of Krishna and Radha. The cost of these ranged from hundreds to thousands of dollars.

In the basement of the Tamil Nadu emporium is the Tamil Nadu Handweavers Cooperative Society, popularly known as Coop-text, which is famed for its Kanjivaram saris. Established seventy years ago, today the coop employs 300,000 weavers and supplies shops all over India. Mary Jolly, the manager, explained that they maintain a high standard by engaging the national institutes for design and fashion, along with traditional institutions such as Kalakshetra in Chennai. At several other emporia, we would learn of similar efforts being made to give a modern touch to the various arts and crafts, while not losing the traditional look and feel.

All saris here are handwoven. A simple cotton one sells for \$10, while the silk saris range from \$70 to \$700. The Kanjivaram saris are woven with *zari*—real gold and silver thread—and priced accordingly. The heavy silk Kanjivaram sari is a favorite for weddings. While sales are substantial, Mary said their trade has been adversely impacted by the trend among youth for the Western clothes available at the new shopping malls.

According to art critic Rajiv Chandran, "Tamil Nadu Emporium is easily one of the best cultural centers in this complex. If you look at the bronze sculptures here, they are of the kind that you will find in the museums all over the world. What you see in the museums in USA, UK and France is the same quality as this collection. But people do not recognize this because there are a thousand such bronzes in the store, and they are not set out individually as in a museum with good lighting and an explanation of the history. Yet, this is one of the best collections of easily-accessed bronzes in the country. The best examples of Siva Nataraja are on display here. Even in Tamil Nadu you cannot buy such things, as they are sent to Delhi for sale. I have seen museum curators and art collectors among the customers here."

"Consider our Indian concept of love," Rajiv went on. "Today we celebrate Valentine's Day in the most silly manner by sending cards. But just see in these bronzes how the Indian imagination visualized Cupid. He is riding a parrot and holding a sugarcane. Kamadeva, our God of Love, appears in springtime. His consort Rati is beautiful in every way. Together they represent the physical and spiritual aspects of love. This



## Karnataka



(counter-clockwise from right) Shopping for fabrics at Cauvery, State Emporium of Karnataka; a wood carving of Lord Vishnu reclining on the serpent Shesha with Goddess Lakshmi at His feet; dolls made of lathe-turned wooden rings; Lord Balaji depicted in wood inlay, a speciality of the state; customer Astha Teneja contemplating her purchase of ornate inlaid furniture







is how our philosophy is contained in these sculptures.”

#### Karnataka: Silk and Sandalwood

Cauvery, named after the state's most important river, is the emporium of the Karnataka State Arts and Handicraft Corporation. Its manager, Adishwar Pershad, who is also president of the Emporia Welfare Association, recently convinced the Delhi government to do a complete renovation of the complex.

Karnataka is responsible for three-quarters of India's silk production and much of its sandalwood. The main crafts on display here are sandalwood carvings, rosewood inlay work, Channapatna toys and Bidriware. The latter is a craft unique to Bidar, the 16th century capital town of Karnataka. Bidriware is an alloy of zinc, copper and other nonferrous metals. After an object has been cast—frequently a box, vase, bangle, or elephant sculpture—it is inlaid with silver wire, polished and then dipped into an oxidizing solution prepared with soil found around the Bidar fort. The zinc alloy turns a lustrous black, with the polished silver in stark contrast.

Many items of lacquerware are sold here, produced in Channapatna, a small town near Bangalore. Lathe-turned objects, such as toys, bead curtains and bangles are decorated by melting sticks of colored lac onto them as they turn.

The inlaid rosewood furniture is breathtaking. It draws many NRIs and foreigners as well as affluent Delhi customers to Cauvery. My niece Aastha Taneja said, “If tomorrow God blesses me with tons of money, this is going to be the first place I will come and shop.”

Manager Pershad tells us, “Our objective is to promote the craft products of our state for the benefit of the artisans. Buying habits of people change, but tradition does not. For example, the *murtis* of our Gods and Goddesses are made as they were in the past. I see no reason for this to change, as the God that I worship today will be worshiped by my children tomorrow.”

Pershad said sixty percent of their business comes from religious items, mostly *murtis* and incense. Ganesha, by far the most popular God, is sold in all mediums, from sandalwood to metal to paintings. Krishna is also popular. Cauvery specializes in small home shrines ranging in price from \$20 to \$2,500.

Pershad points out that his store's crafts are not necessity items, and he hopes that as India's economic conditions improve, a greater awareness of these products will be created.



#### Orissa: Sandstone and Silver Filigree

Utkalika, “excellent art,” is the outlet for the Orissa State Cooperative Handicrafts Corporation Limited. According to manager Sabita Rath, the store's most popular items are their sandstone sculptures. These include Gods and Goddesses, replicas of Konark temple's giant sandstone chariot wheels and statues of dancing girls, all ranging in price from hundreds to thousands of dollars. Utkalika provided the twelve-foot, \$8,000 sandstone wheels that are on display at the Government of India's Ministry of Finance and at the Delhi Development Authority. Rath said, “We export sandstone items in a big way. It is our exclusive item not available in any other emporium.” One such item is a large sandstone bas-relief of Krishna and Arjuna on



the eve of the Mahabharata war. Priced at \$4,500, it is the most expensive in the store at present.

Another specialty is silver filigree, which is normally used in jewelry, is used here to create striking replicas, ranging in price from \$40 to \$400, of the Kalinga boats that transported goods from Orissa to foreign countries in ancient times. Other filigree works include a small silver version of the Konark temple wheels for display in the home.

The Utkalika emporium also features *pata chitra*, paintings. Created with natural pigments on cloth, these narrate incidents from the epics. Very large *pata chitra* paintings sell for over \$1,000. Other forms of wall ornamentation available here are etchings and paintings on palm leaves stitched together from large wall hangings. Utkalika carries a wide range of tribal items and periodically holds exhibitions to promote tribal crafts, such as small animals and lamps cast in *dhokra*, an alloy of brass, copper and nickel. Tribal items also come in iron and terracotta.

As with in the stores, fabrics and saris sell well here. Orissa is gaining renown for its colorful appliqué work, used to create canopies, wall hangings and large gaily colored umbrellas. Many of the latter are sold to hotels in Switzerland and elsewhere, as beach umbrellas. Silk saris here start at \$100 and go up to \$500; even a cotton sari can cost



## Orissa



(counter clockwise from left) The author's daughter Palak models a pendant at Utkalika, Orissa State Emporium; tribal clay masks for wall hangings; Deities in a variety of stone, including serpentine and sandstone; Goddess Durga, created with unhusked rice and needle-point work; Lord Krishna plays His flute in an intricate sandstone carving; replicas of the Deities of Jagannath Puri temple in the store's entry shrine bless the customers





\$100. But many items are quite inexpensive; Utkalika is popular with college students who buy stoles and dupattas for under \$10, and cotton dress material for just \$2 per meter. “In the past,” explained Rath, “there was an impression that the emporia were expensive. But now people are more interested in variety and quality, and our rates are reasonable.” Abhishek Bhargava, an IT consultant from Melbourne, Australia, shopping here for gifts for friends remarked, “I find everything here so pure, and it reminds me of the rich cultural wealth of India. This is the best of India.”

#### Himachal: Shawls and Stoles

Himachal Pradesh is one of India’s northernmost states. Their specialties since ancient times are handmade wool shawls and blankets. According to the manager, D. D. Sharma, the parent company, Himachal Pradesh State Handicrafts and Handloom Corporation, employs 33,000 weavers who are provided facilities and financial support. They use a variety of wool types for their shawls and stoles, and are experimenting with blending modern designs and colors with traditional ones—the same kind of controlled innovation other emporia are attempting. The shawls, which run from \$10 to \$800, are not complete without a Kullu cap with its distinctive red patches, or a Bushari cap with a green velvet patch. Himachal also carries tribal arts, including the ethnic Kullu and Kinnauri dolls in colorful



native costume; and it is famous for Kangra, Chamba and Gompa paintings depicting nature scenes and stories from the life of Krishna.

*Chamba rumal* is a fine-stitched, hand embroidery depicting Deities, flowers, birds or animals which can be viewed from both sides. Customarily, men use these as shoulder shawls and women as flowing veils; nowadays they are also being used as wall hangings, door and fire screens, cushion covers and bedspreads.

More than other handicrafts, the woollens face competition from modern methods. Power loom products are cheaper and sometimes more refined. In response to this challenge, the state handicraft corporation has ceased to rely entirely on its own production centers and has sought out independent weavers who are bringing in appealing new designs. The government of India is working with them to set up two new handloom clusters, one in Kullu for 10,000 weavers, and the other in Mandi for 5,000.

Historically, Himachal weavers have been primarily engaged in agriculture, with the handloom providing additional income. But with the advent of better education and higher-paying jobs, some communities, such as that which produces the popular Kinnari shawl, no longer need the supplemental income, and their weaving is becoming an endangered art. Woodcraft is meeting a similar fate. The new clusters are the state’s attempt to reverse this trend. Sharma told

us, “To keep our handlooms alive, the government will have to ensure that certain sectors are reserved only for handlooms to the exclusion of power looms, which produce the same goods.”



#### Gurjari: Everyone’s Favorite Emporium

Blessed with a prime location in the complex and appealing, affordable products, Gurjari Emporium is the favorite of Delhites and tourists alike. Its name comes from the markets found in every rural village of Gujarat state since ancient times. Enter-

ing the emporium takes one back to these village markets—albeit in a multi-storied concrete building. Gurjari has created a regional atmosphere that other emporia seek to emulate.

This emporium sells handwoven Patola wedding saris and a wide variety of tie-dyed products. These include colorful fabrics sold in bulk, dupattas, saris, silk scarves and various decorative household items. Kutch embroidery is featured on jackets and shawls.

Decorating the store are large clay panels with bas-relief designs in tribal style, embedded with small pieces of mirror in the typical Gujarati manner. One can buy painting-size panels, or commission large-scale work for offices and homes.

Small home altars sell well during the festival season. These are of various sizes and can be dismantled and packed in a suitcase; many are bought by NRIs. Statues of all the Gods and Goddesses for home worship are available. The store manager, Mrs. Sharma, said, “Our foreign clients want to take back with them some souvenir that symbolizes India’s spirituality. They buy fabrics decorated with ‘Aum’ and ‘Ram,’ as well as a large number of Ganesha statues.”

Ritu Kumarj and her husband Pravin were here shopping for gifts before returning to their home in the UK. Pravin said, “Our friends in UK would love to have something traditional from India. These crafts are important outside India, for they connect our

## Himachal

(counter-clockwise from top left) Vikar, a salesman of the Himachal Pradesh emporium, models the state’s trademark Kinnari shawl and Kullu Topi cap; customers picking a top quality wool shawl; a recently henna-painted hand tests the fine weaving; painting of Krishna and Radha on a swing







youth with their tradition. Here I can find unique items not available elsewhere.”

Suzanne, a teacher from Sweden, was here to buy hand-made paper and decorative cloth presentation folders. These are Gurjari's second-best seller, after fabrics, with hundreds sold each day at \$1.50 to \$2.60 to institutional buyers organizing seminars and symposiums.

Rajiv Chandran told us, “Gurjari was the first to start the renaissance in crafts. Mri-nalani Sarabhai, the famous dancer, was the emporium's chairperson. In the early seventies she revived the crafts of Gujarat at the grass-roots level. Gurjari was the outlet for promoting all those crafts, including block printing and bead work.”

The emporium is planning an exhibition in South Delhi shortly that will allow direct sales from Gujarati craftsmen to customers—along the lines of Dilli Haat. Experts in jute furniture, Pithora paintings and clay work will be present.

**Phulkari: Home of Punjabi Embroidery**  
Phulkari is the outlet for Punjab state. Its manager, Shri A. K. Chhabra, explained that *phulkari* means “flower making.” It is a form of embroidery practiced by rural Punjabi women since the 15th century. There are three styles. The first is called true Phulkari, where the pattern is repeated at intervals over the cloth. The second is Bagh or garden Phulkari, where the whole surface of the



(left) Raj Rani Sharma, Gurjari Emporium store manager, in front of a rack of bandani tie-dyed wraps; (above, top to bottom) a white metal ceramic inlay table; looking in the store window at shoppers and, in the foreground, a popular type of home shrine that can be easily dismantled for transport



cloth is embroidered. And the third is called Chope, where the embroidery is only along the corners and the size is much larger.

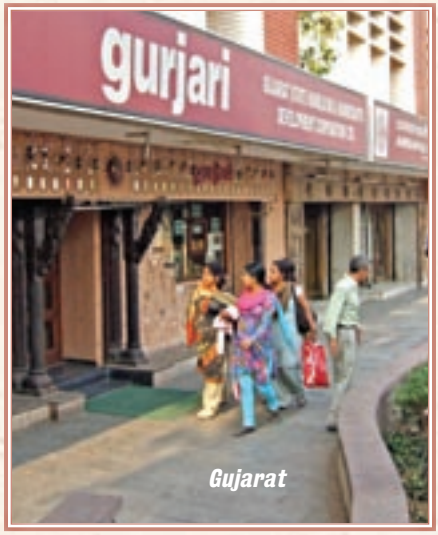
“In a recent development, the fluffy silk threads used for Phulkari are being replaced by more manageable cotton thread and colorfast synthetic yarn. Nowadays one sees a simpler form of Phulkari which is not as elaborate as the traditional three styles.” These Phulkari styles are used exclusively for women's salwar kameez, dupattas and saris. Punjab's cities of Ludhiana and Amritsar are famous for shawls. Here they start in price at \$10 and range to \$1,300 for embroidered pieces in pure pashima wool.

Other popular items, especially among native Punjabis, are the small ceramic figures of a bhangra dance team, the inlaid furniture and decorative items and the large selection of household items and men's clothing. Inlaid images of Radha-Krishna, Ganesh and the Sikh gurus, made in the Hoshiarpur district, are also good sellers.

As with all the emporia, Phulkari's best customers are institutions, large businesses and the various government departments.

While an individual might buy one or two of an item, these institutions will purchase hundreds. The Ministry of External Affairs, for example, buys goods for embassies overseas and as gifts for visiting dignitaries. In Hindu tradition, a shawl is given to honor a person; consequently these institutions buy large numbers year-round.

**Dilli Haat: Power to the People**  
Our last shopping area is not one of the state emporia, but rather a joint project of the New Delhi Municipal Council and Delhi Tourism. *Dilli* is another name for Delhi, and *haat* is a temporary village market. Now a popular cultural landmark in Delhi, Dilli Haat is a permanent marketplace, open year-round, where 200 craftsman at a time can set up shop for two weeks and sell directly to the public. Administrative costs are offset by a 15-rupee (40-cent) entrance fee, plus commissions from the craftsmen. According to the chief manager, Shri Pradeep Ahluwalia, since its opening 13 years ago, 20 million people have bought wares from 50,000 craftsmen. In addition to the crafts,



Dilli Haat has 25 food stalls which offer regional cuisines, and there are a variety of cultural programs, exhibitions and performing arts. This combination of craft, cuisine and entertainment has made Dilli Haat a big

## Gujarat



(left) A birds-eye view of the store shows the typically packed shelves and aisles; (below) a shoulder bag embroidered with cowry shells





hit with tourists and craft lovers. Eliminating the middleman keeps the prices low—and can sometimes afford a buyer the rare opportunity to watch his purchases being created. According to Ahluwalia, Dilli Haat is serving as a model for such marketplaces across India.

Although most stalls here are manned by the craftspeople themselves, one is run by two Gujarat organizations, Shanti Sewa Mahila Sansthan and Shashwat Mahila Sangathan. This stall markets the crafts of the state's Kutch region, where the devastating earthquake of 2001 destroyed over a million homes, killed over 25,000 people and left countless people homeless, widowed and orphaned. The items sold here, such as Gujarati dresses, men's jackets and embroidered wall hangings, benefit those victims.

My daughter's friend Divya is a frequent visitor to Dilli Haat. She explained, "The major difference between the emporia and Dilli Haat is that while the emporia function as shops, this place provides the opportunity to directly buy the crafts from the craftspeople who take the stalls here. Here the prices are supposed to be less than the prices that prevail at the emporia. Moreover, you can buy small things at very reasonable prices. In fact, the variety here is much more than what you get at the emporia."

D. D. Sharma, manager of Himachal Emporium, pointed out, "Dilli Haat has an advantage over the emporia because they hold cultural programs which attract a lot



of people and because they offer the crafts of all states of India in one place. Also, the craftspeople don't have the administrative overhead we do."

#### Other Emporia

There are other emporia and crafts markets beyond Dilli Haat and the six we have just covered. Among the most notable are the emporium of Assam, famous for its exotic tea collection, Bihar for its tusser silks,

Delhi Emporium for its embroidered salwar suits, Andhra Pradesh with its thirty crafts, Madhya Pradesh for its Chanderi saris, Uttar Pradesh for its fine *chikan* work, Rajasthan for its Jaipuri quilts, West Bengal for exquisite *kantha*-work saris and dress materials and Haryana for its vast collection of furnishing fabrics.

We must also mention the Cottage Emporium and Khadi Emporium. These are not connected to the state emporia, but are likewise immensely popular and successful enterprises engaged in the promotion of crafts. Rajiv Chandran commented, "Cottage Emporium is different from the state emporia and Dilli Haat. It looks at crafts from a national perspective and in terms of mass production. For instance, if a corporation has to buy identical gift items for 300 employees, they go to Cottage, because the emporia may not have so many identical things at one time. At a state emporium you come to buy one thing which is special and unique."

Rajiv said, "Khadi, handloomed cotton fabric, has had a beautiful place in our history. The role that Mahatma Gandhi played is absolutely wonderful. Now for the past few years Gandhi's granddaughter Tara Bhattacharya is the chairperson of the khadi movement. Khadi Emporium has involved the designers and they have also brought in new spaces. They have worked with young designers. For example, the famous designer Rohit Bal has created for them special col-

lections using khadi. So khadi has evolved. From a peasant fabric it has become a high-fashion fabric. Designers from Paris and Milan have now started looking at khadi as eco-friendly and fashionable."

#### A Final Word

Despite the onslaught of the shopping mall culture, the state emporia are effectively and beautifully performing their job of showcasing India's ancient arts and crafts. They are keeping our craftsmen employed and the crafts alive, while some work to judiciously modernize both the methods of production and the design of the products. G.V. Subramanyam, manager of Andhra Pradesh's Leepakshmi, pointed out that "most crafts are languishing because of lack of design input." He recommends more government research. In large part, the physical objects and utensils of our Hindu religion are a principal product of these many craft forms.

It is no small achievement that when you ask a common man on the streets of New Delhi where one can buy some traditional crafts of India, he will instantly reply, "The Emporia Complex, near Hanuman Temple." No wonder then that the emporia have a place of their own on the art and craft map of the city and are being visited and patronized not just by our city's residents, or Delhiwallas, but also by visitors and tourists from all over India and around the world.

Some wonder whether our craft culture can survive in this jean age. Rajiv Chan-



## Punjab



(clockwise from top right) Ceramic figurines of Punjabi folk singers and bangra dancers; inlaid furniture; emporium manager A.K. Chhabra poses with a selection of Phulkari blankets and wraps dyed with colors derived from vegetables; an ornate lacquered chess set; semi-precious stones; Palak Malik and friend Divya inspect Punjabi shawls at the state's Phulkari Emporium







dra is emphatically optimistic: "Fashion lasts for a week, but the classical remains forever. There are some things which are *shashwat*, eternal, and some things which are fashionable. The emporia are not a fad; they represent our *shashwat dharohar*, our eternal heritage. This is the beauty of this entire complex. It is a huge dictionary for India located in a single street. Companies coming here to do business from abroad can understand India through these emporia. Every state government needs to continuously invest in their emporium. They must see to it that their outlet is top standard, because they are now attracting a global clientele. But even as is, the emporia are a paradise."

We must acknowledge Mrinalani Sarabhai and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya for thinking so far ahead of their time in promoting India's traditional crafts and setting up such a complex. Chattopadhyaya wrote, "The pride the craftsman derives from his creation and the delight in the perfection of his finished product sustains him. It is this knowledge that is enshrined in our faith in crafts."

Nothing succeeds like success. The emporia will keep serving the glorious craft tradition of India as long as clients keep shopping from them. Museums and craft shows are all fine and good; but as succinctly put by one emporium employee, "It is finally only through commerce that the art can survive."

## Dilli Haat



(counter-clockwise from top left): Shoppers flood into Dilli Haat; a craftsman displays the controls mechanisms for his puppets; performers like these traveling musicians from Rajasthan enhance the appeal of Dilli Haat; bags and tablecloths; a hands-on demonstration of henna decoration being experienced by tourists from across the globe; a young shopper examines a display of hand puppets; a spice booth; one of two dozen regional food stalls







**Dharma Summit: Conference participants assemble for a group photo**

The education program focused on improving the way Hinduism is taught in American primary and secondary schools and gaining greater Hindu influence at the university level. “How can these non-Hindu scholars,” asked one speaker, “think that their voice can convey Hinduism better than a Hindu? We have to reclaim our authority to define ourselves. We have to step up to a new level of sophistication.”

Palaniswami recapped the California textbook controversy, focusing on the disparity in the way various religions are presented. Hinduism, he demonstrated, is consistently shown in a negative light, especially compared to the sensitive, sympathetic treatment afforded to other religions. In 2007, as a first step to counteract this, HINDUISM TODAY’s managing editor, Sannyasin Arumugaswami, worked with a focus group of educators to produce a history of Hinduism between 300 CE to 1800 CE for secondary-school classes. Highlighting another area of concern at the conference, Arumugaswami gave an overview (also available on YouTube) of the religious worker visa program under which priests and temple builders are brought to the US and showed how recent changes in the administration of the visa have negatively impacted Hindus by making it more difficult to get visas. He pointed out that India provides a larger immigrant group to the US gaining permanent residency (approximately 50,000 per year) than any other country except Mexico, and this predominantly Hindu population requires temple builders and priests from India to meet its needs.

In a session on Hinduism and Indic studies at the college level, Dr. Balram Singh discussed the ongoing problem of the disrespectful and inaccurate depiction of Hinduism in academia. He also assessed the bleak fate of major grants given by the Hindu community to various universities in the past few years: “All the India-related chairs established by the funds from the

community have turned out to be either indifferent or anti-Hindu academic positions.” On a positive note, Dr. Umesh Jois of the Omkar Foundation reported on his well-received program of conducting puja worship on campus for students.

Dr. Anuja Bhargava chaired a valuable session on infrastructure development in which participants concluded that Hindus need to establish professional-level community services, including youth religious education, marriage counseling, elder support and family crisis hotlines. While a few temples, such as the Hindu Temple of Greater Chicago, successfully run such programs with volunteers; the consensus was that the community needs to move up to a well-managed, paid staff. Prof. B.V.K. Sastry advocated establishing a program to train Hindus as qualified chaplains to serve in health-care facilities, prisons and the military.

The final day of presenting focused on interfaith efforts. Bawa Jain asserted that Hindus should study organizations such as B’nai B’rith to understand how to impact the political process in America, and Professor Nathan Katz of the Florida International University in Miami gave a well-received talk on the synergistic relationship between Jews and Hindus (see this issue’s page 9).

Summarizing the consensus of the 2007 Hindu Dharma Summit, Dr. Chaudhary identified four strategic action areas: 1) a 2008 conference in Delhi will address control of temples in India by the government; 2) a committee of academic experts was formed that will work with HINDUISM TODAY magazine in creating more textbook supplements for US schools; 3) Hindus must develop sustainable, appropriate and effective social service programs connected with temples and 4) Hindus must work more closely with other religious groups.

**Florida site:** (left) the bulls-eye shaped University of Southern Florida campus proved a lush conference venue; (right) organizer Ved Chaudhary opens the event

spite a century-and-a-half separation from India. He suggested their experience in Trinidad could be of use to American Hindus. He was followed by Chandresh Sharma, a young Trinidad politician who inspired the audience with this clarion call: “The world is looking to the Hindu religion for answers. We need to take our rightful place. Fear not to be a Hindu wherever you are.”

The second day began with a plenary session address on religion and media (see [www.youtube.com/hinduismtodayvideos](http://www.youtube.com/hinduismtodayvideos)) by HINDUISM TODAY’s editor, Paramacharya Palaniswami, explaining how the media views religion and, in particular, Hinduism and India. The conference then divided into two parallel sessions, one dealing with education and the other with media and outreach.



## COMMUNICATION

# Meeting Western-World Challenges

Speakers call for action in education, media outreach and community ministry

**T**HE SECOND HINDU DHARMA SUMMIT met December 14 to 16, 2007, at the University of Southern Florida to explore the challenges facing today’s Hindus in America and internationally.

There was much to discuss, and words were not minced. Among the first speakers was Dr. Anuja Prashar of the UK, a fourth generation Hindu out of India via Africa. She astounded the audience with her account of the Joshua Project, a global Christian evangelical plan carefully engineered to evangelize and hopefully convert the remaining 2,334 “people groups”—most of them in India—who have yet to accept Christianity. “I grew up in Africa and went to Christian schools,” she shared, “but I never saw these aggressive plans. As I completed my PhD in international business, I became aware that these groups function exactly as multinational corporations.” Hindus, she advised, should become aware just how sophisticated the missionary work is. And, she warned, “There is a violence in their language—for example, *crusade*—that is remarkable for this day and age.”

Dr. Prashar’s unsettling presentation set the tone for a high-energy weekend—just as intended by organizer Ved Chaudhary of the Hindu Collective Initiative ([www.hcina.org/](http://www.hcina.org/)). The HCI was proposed by Swami Dayananda Saraswati during the Dharma Summit 2005 and nurtured since then by Chaudhary to “impart education about Hindu culture, religion and philosophy to our next generation and remove bias and misperceptions about our faith traditions so that we can maintain our culture and traditions with pride and dignity in North America.”

This year’s summit, planned and hosted by the Hindu University of America, brought together one hundred Hindu community leaders, swamis, academics and activists. Speakers included educationalist Dr. Piyush Agrawal, author Robert Arnett, Dr. Shiva G. Bajpai of Northridge University, Professor T.S. Rukmani of Concordia University and Swamini Janeshwari Devi of Barsana Dham. Topics encompassed global Hindu human rights; passing on the religion to the next generation; Hinduism in the US education system; and how Hindus can better work

with the media, governmental agencies and interfaith groups “to improve the portrayal of India and Hindu dharma.”

In addition to Dr. Prashar’s wake-up call regarding Christian missionary activities, the first day’s sessions addressed human rights in Bangladesh and Kashmir, and the Hindu American Foundation’s efforts to survey human rights issues in Hindu communities worldwide. Of particular concern is the management of Hindu temples by the state governments of India. In his presentation, Prakash Rao explained how temple lands have been sold illegally and temple income diverted into government coffers. “We are fighting for separation of church and state in India,” he declared, and asked US organizations for help. Dr. Chaudhary followed up rhetorically, “Why do they take control of only Hindu temples and siphon off the money to the treasury? Why do they not take over the management of a gurudwara, a mosque or a church?”

Sri Sat Maharaj of the Hindu Mahasabha of Trinidad described the strong Hindu tradition that his country has maintained de-





SADHANA

## Tales of Yogis and Caves

Kailash Ashram builds seven chambers for solitude

BY CHOODIE SHIVARAM, BENGALURU

RI JAYENDRA PURI SWAMI OVERSEES all Kailash Ashram activities and receives thousands of devotees. The ashram's powerful Rajarajeshwari temple, its priest training school and resident swamis and pundits all function as intended by the founder, Sri Tiruchy Mahaswamigal. But Jayendra Puri Swami, his successor, recently felt a need for greater emphasis on *sadhana*, personal religious discipline, at the famous ashram of Bengaluru. He recounts the moment of insight: "To provide the correct atmosphere to perform *sadhana*, the idea of the caves came in a flash." July of 2007 saw the completion of seven individual, man-made caves of concrete designed for yogic retreats.

When Sri Jayendra Puri Swami announced his wish to go into one of the caves for 72 hours, little did he anticipate a group of enthusiastic volunteers immediately wanting to join him. And they were not sadhus or ascetics but children brimming with undiluted devotion and innocence. Every boy in the priest training school, from eight to nineteen, proclaimed that he wanted to go.

"I had only jokingly asked if they were prepared to come into a cave and experience it. But I never imagined they'd jump at the offer. So we gave them numbers and drew lots to select five. I was only hoping that the

youngest would not be selected. I left it for Divine Grace to guide the choice," related Swami. The boys, on the other hand, were fervently praying to Goddess Rajarajeshwari for their name to be selected. Swami said admiringly, "They were fully aware of the rigors of staying in the cave and what was expected of them, yet they were eager to go through the experience."

Each cave is made for a single person and has three small chambers, one for sleeping, one for meditation and one for other activities, besides a bathroom. A thick glass on top allows sunlight to illuminate the cave during the day. The door cannot be locked from the inside, only from outside. It also has a viewing glass to monitor the health of those inside.

A person on retreat inside the cave does not see or talk to anyone. Food is served through a small, shuttered opening in the entrance. The striving yogi can leave a small note on his tray to convey a message or express a need, but he is not allowed talk.

While one cave is reserved for the use of Sri Jayendra Puri Swamiji, the other six are open to others seriously seeking to meditate. There is also a dormitory at the end of the row of seven caves that can house five people who come to do *sadhana*. A large kitchen nearby provides meager meals. This first facility is for men; a similar one is planned for women.



HINDUISM TODAY

### The Young Yogis

The five boys chosen ranged in age from 13 to 15. Swamiji prepared them for the experience, explaining what they would be experiencing. With garlands, honors and expectation hanging on their shoulders, the five yogis and one swami entered their individual caves as the evening fell. Once inside, they were completely cut off from the outside world. The doors were locked from the outside.

Following Swamiji's guidelines, each boy took within him only bare necessities. Nothing else was allowed, not even books. "Just providing a peaceful spiritual atmosphere is not enough," Swami explained. "If he has the freedom to still interact with the outside world, then the *tapasvin* will be deceiving himself. The caves facility is provided for *sadhana*, and restrictions are set down so that he will do only *sadhana*."

The youth were closely monitored from



**Set for sadhana:** (left) The boys wait in front of the new caves, ready for their challenge; Jayendra Puri Swami, spiritual leader of thousands and head of Kailasa Ashram; (above) the fast vessels, decreasing in size; the tiny pot that holds the 15th day meal; (right) A parade honors the heroes as they emerge from the cave

outside. Their diet was fruits, placed in the window thrice a day. None of them pleaded to get out. Whatever they were experiencing—be it loneliness, claustrophobia, cold or insects—did not cause them to waver from their resolve.

Emerging three days later, they reported "a sense of happiness we had never experienced before." Fifteen-year-old Jayaram, from Bangarpet village, shared, "I wanted to do *tapas*, so I prayed to Gayatri to be chosen." Once in the cave, he recounted, "I was given fruits three times a day, apples, bananas and mosambi (Indian sweet lime). I was never tempted towards other food, never felt hungry, never regretted going into the cave and never felt like coming out."

The youngest, Puneela, 13, spent his days immersed in activity. "I swept the room, had a bath, did *sandhya vandana* (Vedic prayers three times a day) and spent the rest of the day doing japa. I did not remember friends



or home; I was not scared of the dark or of being alone. I would love to go back and stay for longer."

Fifteen-year-old Shivagurunathan, from Salem, did japa continuously, something he had never done before. "I could hear Swamiji doing puja in his cave. I listened to him singing. I'd do japa throughout, and practice yoga twice a day. Forever we were immersed in thoughts of God. Swami had advised us not to talk to anyone; we strictly followed this," said the priest-in-training.

"I was confident that the children could make it," said Swamiji. "I did not give them an assignment this time. But had I given one, each would have completed it. This time I just wanted to see how they would do. They have amply proved their spiritual resolve."

### Swami's Retreat

Confident the boys were being closely monitored, Swamiji enjoyed his own time of solitude and retreat. He reports that once inside, he found himself lost to the world and completely immersed in the Divine. He felt an overwhelming presence of Goddess Rajarajeshwari. "I went in the cave without any specific goal. I was just very, very happy being all alone to myself with Devi. There was no feeling of dependence. I did not have any unusual mystical experiences. I concentrated completely on Devi puja. This was my sole intention, to contemplate it thoroughly—a wonderful opportunity I never had until today. I could feel that it could go on for my whole life, and I would not need anybody. I felt the Mother will be with me always. Though I always knew this, it struck me here in a deeper, special way. I was not worried about anything, even if food failed to come, I would have continued." Even menial tasks appealed to Swamiji: "I completely

enjoyed the daily chores, such as mopping the floor and scrubbing the puja vessels."

Swamiji declared, "When I go next, it will be for a longer period, perhaps a month. Many rishis and saints have found such seclusion a necessity. It is related to the opening of some of the chakras."

After these enthusiastic reports from Swamiji and the youth, there is a line of seekers wanting to have the experience.

The caves are not for the curious or uncommitted. Complete medical tests are required, and each candidate must spend 15 days living at the ashram in a communal room in preparation for his time of solitude.

### Month-Long Fasts and Future Retreats

"The ideal time in the caves is one month," says Swamiji. "We have prepared a special discipline for this, the *chandrayana vrata*, a progressive reduction of food. This fast consists of diminishing portions served in clay pots—one designed for each day—until the portion reaches the size of a thumb on the new moon day. Then the size of the pots gradually increases until the full moon day, when the person comes out." During this fast, only one type of food is given—*kichari*, a balanced porridge of rice, dhal and vegetables. This monotonous diet prevents desire from being directed toward eating.

The most likely next residents will be the other boys of the priest school. Chetana, from Sringeri, is eagerly waiting his turn. So are the other sixteen, their bright eyes twinkling with daydreams of yogis and saintly *sadhana*. Swamiji challenged them, "Are you willing to do 10,000 *japas* a day for twelve-and-a-half days when you go in next?" "Yes!" was the roar that filled the room. Swamiji knows his students will do what they are ordained to do.





EDUCATIONAL INSIGHT

# All About Meditation

Mystical Guidelines to the  
Fine Art of Exploring the  
Wonderful Within of Yourself

From the Teachings of  
Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami,  
Founder of Hinduism Today

**T**he growth of the lotus flower is perhaps the best metaphor for the soul as it unfolds in consciousness. It begins in the mud, like a soul caught up in the instinctive nature; then it emerges into the water as a stem, like the soul immersed in the intellect and emotions; and ultimately it appears above the water as a bud, just as the soul awakens to its spiritual nature. For the soul, this stage of the bud beginning to open as a beautiful flower marks the onset of inner striving, seeking to know oneself and fathom the mysteries of life through the introspective process of meditation. ¶Meditation is an art, a definite art, and well worth working for to become accomplished. It is not easy, and yet it is not difficult. It only takes persistence, working day after day to learn to control and train the outer as well as the subtle, inner forces.



Meditation is a long journey, a pilgrimage into the mind itself. Generally we become aware that there is such a thing as meditation after the material world has lost its attraction to us and previous desires no longer bind us to patterns of fear, greed, attachment and ramification. We then seek through philosophy and religion to answer the questions, “Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going?” We ask others. We read books. We ponder and wonder. We pray. We even doubt for a while that there is a Truth to be realized, or that we, with all our seeming imperfection, can realize it if it does exist. Oddly enough, this is the beginning of the meditator’s journey on the path, for we must empty ourselves fully before the pure, superconscious energies can flow freely through us. Once this state of emptiness and genuine searching is reached, we soon recognize the futile attempt to find Truth on the outside. We vividly begin to know, from the depth of ourselves, a knowing we could not explain or justify. We simply know that Reality, or the Self God, resides within, and we must go within ourselves to realize it. Of itself, that knowing is not enough. Even great efforts to meditate and vast storehouses of spiritual knowledge are not enough. Many have tried to find the Truth this way. The Truth is deeper and is discovered by the resolute devotee who dedicates his life to the search; who lives a balanced life according to the *yamas* and *niyamas*, the Vedic spiritual laws; who willingly undergoes change; who finds and obeys a spiritual teacher, or *satguru*; and who learns precisely the disciplined art of meditation. This, then, outlines the destination of the meditator’s journey and his means of travel.

One of the first steps is to convince the subconscious mind that meditation is good for us. We may want to meditate consciously, yet maintain fears or doubts about meditation. Somewhere along the way, a long series of events occurred and, upon reaction to them, awareness became externalized. We became geared to the materialistic concepts of the external world. As we begin to feel that urgency to get back within, the old patterns of thought and emotion, cause and effect, naturally repeat themselves. For a while, the contents of the subconscious may conflict with our concepts of what it is like to fully live spiritually. Our habits will be undisciplined, our willpower ineffective. Quite often the subconscious seems almost like another person, because it is always doing something unanticipated.

In these early stages, we must mold the areas that are different into a new lifestyle so that there will be nothing in the subconscious that opposes what is in the conscious or superconscious mind. Only when all three of these areas of consciousness act in harmony can meditation be truly attained and

Find a quiet retreat for the practice of yoga, sheltered from the wind, level and clean, free from rubbish, smoldering fires and ugliness, and where the sound of waters and the beauty of the place help thought and contemplation.

*Krishna Yajur Veda, Shvetashvatara Upanishad 2.10 (translation by Juan Mascaro)*



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The experienced meditator becomes vibrant and confident in himself. He learns to lean on his own spine. Answers begin to become real and vibrant, hooked onto the end of every question. His body radiates new grace and strength. His mind, disciplined and uncluttered, becomes one-pointedly agile. His relationships take on new, profound meanings. His emotions are stabilized and reflect his new-found tranquillity. These and many more are the dynamic rewards of the sincere aspirant who searches within through meditation.

## The Yoga Sutra by Sage Patanjali

### Excerpts from the Free Rendering by Alice A. Bailey, 1927, of Hinduism’s Seed Scripture on Yoga

Union (or yoga) is achieved through the subjugation of the psychic (emotional) nature, and the restraint of the *chitta* (or mind). When this has been accomplished, the yogi knows himself as he is in reality. Up till now the inner man has identified himself with his forms and with their active modifications. Sutas 1-4

These modifications (activities) are correct knowledge, incorrect knowledge, fancy,

passivity (sleep) and memory. The control of these modifications of the internal organ, the mind, is to be brought about through tireless endeavor and through non-attachment. When the object to be gained is sufficiently valued, and the efforts towards its attainment are persistently followed without intermission, then the steadiness of the mind (restraint of the *vrittis*) is secured. Sutas 6, 12, 13, 14

The consciousness of an object is attained

by concentration upon its fourfold nature: the form, through examination; the quality (or *guna*), through discriminative participation; the purpose, through inspiration (or bliss); and the soul, through identification. A further stage of samadhi is achieved when, through one pointed thought, the outer activity is quieted. In this stage, the *chitta* is responsive only to subjective impressions. The samadhi just described passes not beyond the bound of the phenomenal world; it passes not beyond the Gods, and those concerned with the concrete world. The attainment of this state (spiritual consciousness) is rapid for those whose will is intensely alive. Sutas 17–19; 21

The obstacles to soul cognition are bodily disability, mental inertia, wrong question-

ing, carelessness, laziness, lack of dispassion, erroneous perception, inability to achieve concentration, failure to hold the meditative attitude when achieved. Pain, despair, misplaced bodily activity and wrong direction (or control) of the life currents are the results of the obstacles in the lower psychic nature. Sutas 30-31

The peace of the *chitta* can be brought about through the practice of sympathy, tenderness, steadiness of purpose, and dispassion in regard to pleasure or pain, or towards all forms of good or evil. The peace of the *chitta* is also brought about by the regulation of the prana or life breath. The mind can be trained to steadiness through those forms of concentration which have relation to the sense

perceptions. By meditation upon Light and upon Radiance, knowledge of the Spirit can be reached and thus peace can be achieved. The *chitta* is stabilized and rendered free from illusion as the lower nature is purified and no longer indulged. When this super-contemplative state is reached, the Yogi acquires pure spiritual realization through the balanced quiet of the *chitta*. When this state of perception is itself also restrained (or superseded), then is pure Samadhi achieved. Sutas 34–37; 47, 51

The eight means [or limbs] of yoga are: the commandments, or *yama*; the rules, or *niyama*; posture, or *asana*; right control of life-force, or *pranayama*; abstraction, or *pratyahara*; attention, or *dharana*; meditation, or *dhyana*; and contemplation, or samadhi.



sustained. For us to be afraid of the subconscious is unwise, for it then holds a dominant position in our life. The subconscious is nothing more than the accumulation of vibratory rates of experience encountered by awareness when it was externalized, a storehouse containing the past.

### Remold the Subconscious Mind

The solution to subconscious confusion is to set a goal for ourselves in the external world and to have a positive plan incorporating meditation daily as a lifestyle within that goal. Through this positive initiative and daily effort in meditation, awareness is centered within. We learn how to disentangle and unexternalize awareness.

As soon as strong initiative is taken to change our nature toward refinement, a new inner process begins to take place. The forces of positive accomplishment from each of our past lives begin to manifest in this one. The high points of a past life, when something great has happened, become strung together. These merits or good deeds are vibrations in the ether substance of our memory patterns, because each one of us, right now, is a sum total of all previous experience. All of the distractions of the external area of the mind begin to fade, and positive meditation becomes easily attainable. It is not difficult to move our individual awareness quickly within when distractions occur.

### Set Goals & New Patterns

This new pattern of setting goals and meeting them strengthens the will. One such goal is to perform *sadhana* every day without fail during a morning vigil period of worship, *japa*, scriptural study and meditation. Daily meditation has to become part of our lifestyle, not just a new something we do or study about. It must become a definite part of us. We have to live to meditate. This is the only way to reach the eventual goal on the path—the realization of the all-pervasive Siva. Deep meditation takes the power of our spiritual will, which is cultivated through doing everything we do to perfection, through meeting the challenges of our goals, and through its constant expression as we seek to do more than we think we can each day. So, set your spiritual goals according to where you are on the path. Set goals for deeper, more superconscious meditation, for a change of your personality or outer nature, for better service to your fellow man, and for a totally religious lifestyle.

Goals are generally not used in spiritual life, because the inner mechanism of goal setting is not clearly understood. Dynamic, successful people who go into business for themselves have to have a positive, aggressive plan and keep their lives in a good rou-

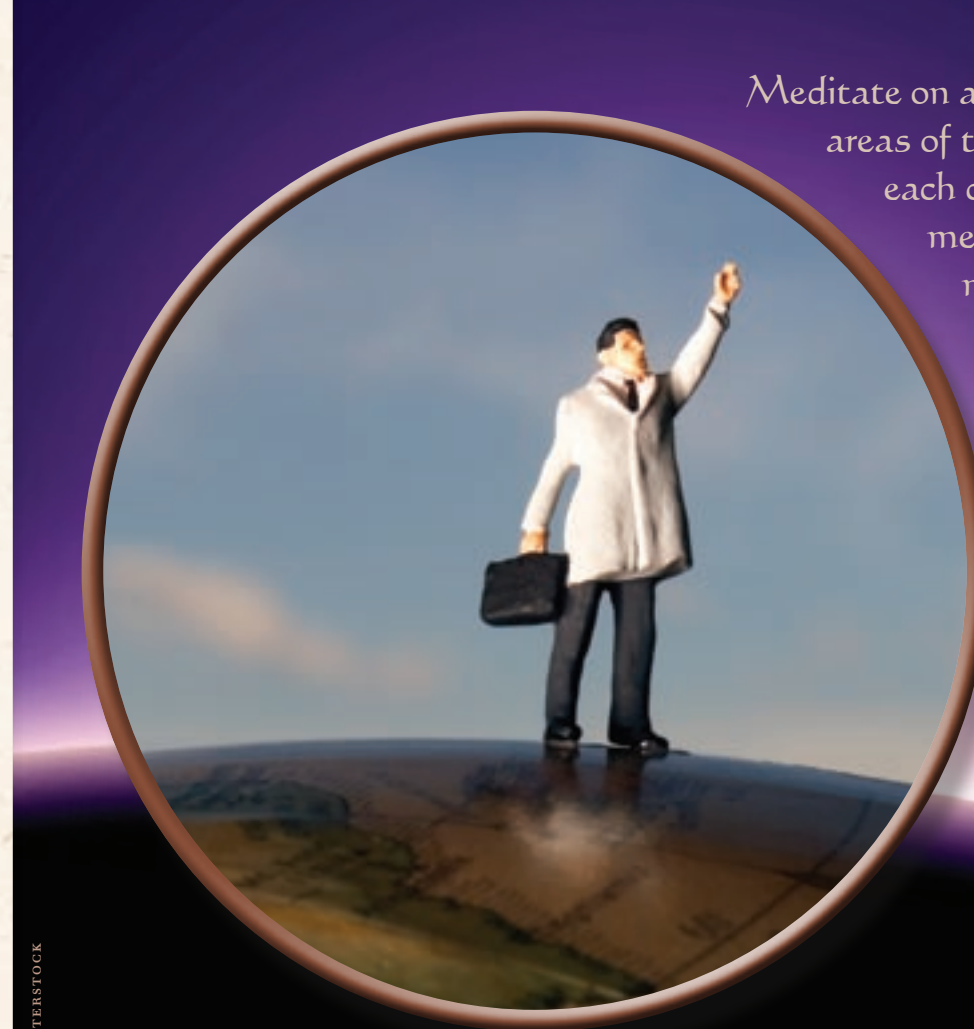
tine to achieve success. The most prominent among them begin and end each day at a certain time in order to sustain the pressure of the business world. We can and should approach the practice of meditation in a similar way. Like the businessman, we want to succeed in our quest, the only difference being the choice of an inner goal as opposed to the choice of an outer goal, the fulfillment of which entangles us and further externalizes awareness.

In the early stages of meditation, it's very difficult to sit without moving, because that has not been part of our lifestyle. The subconscious mind has never been programmed to contentedly sit quietly. We didn't see our families doing that. Perhaps we haven't seen anybody doing that. No example has been set. Therefore, we have to be patient with ourselves and not sit for too long in the beginning. Start by sitting for ten minutes without moving. In a few weeks, extend it to twenty minutes, then a half hour. Thus we avoid being fanatical and allow the subconscious to make its necessary adjustments.

These adjustments are physical as well as emotional and intellectual. The nerve currents rearrange themselves so that prolonged stillness and absence of external activity is comfortable. Similarly, the philosophy of the path of enlightenment fully penetrates every layer of the subconscious, adjusting previous erroneous concepts of ourselves and enabling us to consciously intuit various philosophical areas and know them to be right and true from our personal experience of superconsciousness. This, then, may take a few years.

If we plant a tree, we have to wait for it to grow and mature before we enjoy its shade. So it is in meditation. We make our plans for beginning the practices of meditation, then give ourselves enough time, several years, to fully adjust and remold the subconscious mind. Living as we do in the externalized culture of the West, we are conditioned to be in a hurry to get everything. When we try to internalize awareness too quickly through various intense and sometimes fanatical ways, we reap the reaction. Meditation goes fine for a brief span, but then externalizes again according to the programming of our family and culture.

To permanently alter these patterns, we have to work gently to develop a new lifestyle for the totality of our being—physically, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. This we do a little at a time. Wisdom tells us that it cannot be done all at once. We have to be patient with ourselves. If we are impatient on the path, failure is in view. We are going to fail, because instant spiritual unfoldment is a fairy-tale concept. It is far better that we recognize that there will be difficult challenges as the subconscious looms up, with all of its conflicts and confu-



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sions, heavy and strong. When it does, we must face them calmly, through spiritual journaling, *vasana daha tantra*. If our eventual goal is clearly in mind and we have a positive step-by-step plan on how to reach that goal, then we won't get excited when something goes wrong, because we view our mental and emotional storms in their proper and temporary perspective.

### Face the Barriers

Not only does the subconscious create barriers in our own minds, it also draws to us the doubts and worries of other people for us to face and resolve. There is such a vast warehouse of negative conditioning against meditation that it is almost useless to begin if we believe any of it at all. We have all heard a few of the fears: "Something terrible must have happened to you as a child if you want to go into that." "You don't love me anymore. That's why you meditate—you're withdraw-

Meditate on awareness as an individual entity flowing through all areas of the mind, as the free citizen of the world travels through each country, each city, not attaching himself anywhere. In meditation, awareness must be loosened and made free to move vibrantly and buoyantly into the inner depths where peace and bliss remain undisturbed for centuries. We have the big city called thought. We have another big city called emotion. There's yet another big city called fear, and another one nearby called worry. But we are not those cities. We're just the traveler. When we're in San Francisco, we are not San Francisco. When we're aware of worry, we are not worry. We are just the inner traveler who has become aware of the different areas of the mind.

ing." "You're just afraid of society and responsibility. It's an escape from the real world that you can't cope with." "You're going to be poor if you meditate. Everyone who meditates is broke, you know." And so it goes, on and on.

We do have to answer these objections for the subconscious and thus settle all doubts within ourselves. Of course, the results of meditation will themselves convince the subconscious of the benefit of inner *sadhana* as we bring forth perceptive insights, renewed energy, a happy and balanced life and spiritual attainment. Negative conditioning breaks down as we prove to ourselves according to our own experience that it was wrong. Such conditioning is inhibiting to some and has to be corrected. To counteract it, we can ask ourselves, "Why? What is it all about? How did I attract these problems? Do I still have such doubts in my subconscious, consciously unknown?" We can further ask, "Who has done the conditioning? What was their life like? Were they happy people?" Finally, from our own positive efforts to cognize, we actually remold the subconscious, erase false concepts and become free.

The mind in its apparently endless confusion and desires leads us by novelty from one thing to the next. The reaction to this causes the miseries of the world, and the miseries of the world happen inside of people. But occasionally we have to call a halt to the whole thing and get into ourselves. That's the process of meditation. It's an art. It's a faculty we have within ourselves which, when developed, gives

a balance and a sense to life. And everyone, whether they know it or not, is searching, trying to find out what life is all about.

So many people tell me, "Oh, I would like to study *yoga*, but I just don't have the time," "I can't get quiet enough," or "The kids make too much noise," or some excuse like that. They don't realize that you don't become quiet automatically. Becoming quiet is a systematic process. You become quiet systematically. It might take you two weeks of practice before you can sit down and feel that you've made any progress at all, or even feel like sitting down and trying to become quiet. But it's one of those things you eventually have to do. You get up and cook breakfast because you have to eat. You are hungry. And when you become hungry enough to get quiet within yourself, you will do so automatically. You will want to. And then what happens? You will sit down, and your mind will race. Say, "Mind, stop!" and see how fast you can make your mind stop and become quiet. Say, "Emotions, you are mind-controlled," and see how quiet you become.

### Establish the Right Conditions

We now come to the practical aspects of meditation. In the beginning, it is best to find a suitable room that is dedicated solely to meditation. If you were a carpenter, you would get a shop for that purpose. You have a room for eating, a room for



sleeping. Now you need a separate room just for the purpose of meditation. When you find it, wash the walls and ceiling, wash the windows. Prepare a small altar if you like, bringing together the elements of earth, air, fire and water. Establish a time for your meditations and meet those times strictly. There will be days when you just don't feel like meditating. Good. Those are often the best days, the times when we make strong inner strides. The finest times to meditate are six in the morning, twelve noon, six in the evening, and twelve midnight. All four of these times could be used, or just choose one. The period of meditation should be from ten minutes to one-half hour to begin with.

By sitting up straight, with the spine erect, we transmute the energies of the physical body. Posture is important, especially as meditation deepens and lengthens. With the spine erect and the head balanced at the top of the spine, the life force is quickened and intensified as energies flood freely through the nerve system. In a position such as this, we cannot become worried, fretful, depressed or sleepy during our meditation. But if we slump the shoulders forward, we short-circuit the life energies. In a position such as this, it is easy to become depressed, to have mental arguments with oneself or another, or to experience unhappiness. So, learn to sit dynamically, relaxed and yet poised. The full-lotus position, with the right foot resting on the left thigh and the left foot above, resting on the right thigh, is the most stable posture to assume, hands resting in the lap, right hand on top, with the thumbs touching.

### Control Thinking with Your Breathing

The first observation you may have when thus seated for meditation is that thoughts are racing through the mind substance. You may become aware of many, many thoughts. Also the breath may be irregular. Therefore, the next step is to transmute the energies from the intellectual area of the mind through proper breathing, in just the same way that proper attitude, preparation and posture transmuted the physical-instinctive energies. Through regulation of the breath, thoughts are stilled and awareness moves into an area of the mind which does not think, but conceives and intuit.

There are vast and powerful systems of breathing that can stimulate the mind, sometimes to excess. Deep meditation requires only that the breath be systematically slowed or lengthened. This happens naturally as we go within, but can be encouraged by a method of breathing called *kalibasa* in Shum, my language of meditation. During *kalibasa*, the breath is counted, nine counts as we inhale, hold one count, nine counts as we exhale, hold one count. The length of the beats, or the rhythm of the breath, will slow as the meditation is sustained, until we are counting to the beat of the heart, *hridaya spanda pranayama*. This exercise allows awareness to flow into an area of the mind that is intensely alive, peaceful, blissful and conceives the totality of a concept rather than thinking out the various parts.

Control of the breath, to be learned properly, might take months

or even years. That's all right. If you were learning to play a musical instrument, it would take months or even years to perfect the basic principles of making chords and putting chords together into a melody. There is no hurry. Hurry is the age we want to bypass when we meditate. The control of the breath is exactly the same as the control of awareness, so it is good to be patient in the early stages and perfect each element of practice.

During meditation, the breath, the heartbeat, metabolism—it all slows down, just like in sleep. You know, deep meditation and deep sleep are extremely similar. Therefore, the practice of pranayama—regulation of the breath and the pranas, the currents of the body, should really be mastered first. In the very same way, the dancer doesn't just start out dancing. He starts out exercising first. He may exercise strenuously for a year before he begins to really dance. The pianist doesn't sit down at the piano and start with a concert. He starts with the scales and with the chords. He starts by limbering his fingers, by perfecting his rhythm and posture. Meditation has to be taught like one of the fine arts. It's only the finely refined

person who can really learn to meditate. Not everyone who wants to meditate can learn to meditate. Not everyone who wants to learn to dance or to play the piano can learn how to really, really do it. We need this preparation of the physical body so that the physical and emotional bodies behave themselves while you are in a deep state of meditation.

Your breath will slow down until you almost seem to stop breathing. Sometimes you do, and you're breathing with an inner breath. You have to educate yourself to that so it doesn't make you fearful and bring you out of meditation with a jerk and a gasp, which can then inhibit you. You can get fearful in meditation. So, good basics must be learned for one to become a deep meditator. You can spend hours or years working with the breath. Find a good teacher first, one who keeps it simple and gentle. You don't need to strain. Start simply by slowing the breath down. Breathe by moving the diaphragm instead of the chest. This is how children breathe, you know. So, be a child. If you learn to control the breath, you can be master of your awareness.

As we learn to breathe rhythmically and from the diaphragm, we also release tensions in the solar plexus. We learn to be spontaneous and free on the inside, and life force runs through us in an uninhibited way. We achieve and learn to maintain contentment, *santosha*. All of these things come through the simple techniques we practice while in meditation. But the practice of meditation is not the end. It is the total being of man that is the end to be sought for—the well-rounded, content, spontaneous being that is totally free.

### Going Within, Four Easy Steps

After you have quieted the body, and the breath is flowing regularly, close your eyes. Close your ears and shut off the external sense perceptions. As long as you are aware of sights and sounds on the outside, you are not concentrated. It is a fallacy to think you have to find a totally silent place before you can go within. When your senses are stilled, you don't hear any sounds. You're in a state of silence. You don't hear a car that passes, you

## Fourteen Secrets for Serious Meditators

- 1 Create your sacred space. Keep it clean and uplifting.
- 2 The only bad meditation is the one you skip. Use the power of habit. A strong meditation habit will carry you forward with less effort.
- 3 Decide on your meditation subject or goal and stick to it.
- 4 Meditation is hard work. The more effort you give to it, the more results you get back from it. Meditate when it's not easy. That is when the most progress takes place.
- 5 Learn to work past the obstacles of distraction.
- 6 Nurture curiosity; make your innersearch engaging.
- 7 Perfect your technique, but work equally hard to nurture the right spirit. It's the spirit/ will that matters most.
- 8 Move from each meditation to a positive external activity, and from a positive project into meditation. Let the external energies impel your seeking, and let your inner discoveries inform your outer life.
- 9 Meditate in the morning before you read your e-mail, open the newspaper or turn on the TV.
- 10 Become what you seek to experience. The quality of your meditations is a reflection of the state of your nerve system and the purity of your karmas.
- 11 Keep working on yourself between meditations.
- 12 Progress is cyclical, like a spiral. There are ups and downs, but the trajectory overall is always up. Enjoy the days when the wind is in your sails, and work on the other days extra hard.
- 13 Keep expectations realistic and achievable.
- 14 Write down your insights when they come, bringing them into words to impress the subconscious.

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CHRIS DAVIDSON

don't hear a bird that sings, because your awareness has shifted to different perceptions. It helps, but it's not necessary, to have a totally silent place. This is not always possible, so it is best not to depend on outer silence. We must discover silence within ourselves. When you are reading a book that is extremely interesting, you are not hearing noises around you. You should be at least that interested in your meditations.

Having thus quieted the outer forces, we are prepared to meditate. Just sitting is not enough. To meditate for even ten or fifteen minutes takes as much energy as one would use in running around a city block three times. A powerful meditation fills and thrills us with an abundance of energy to be used creatively in the external world during the activities of daily life. Great effort is required to make inner strides. We must strive very, very hard and meet each inner challenge.

When we go into meditation, what do we meditate upon? What do we think about during meditation? Usually the sincere devotee will have a guru, or spiritual guide, and follow his instructions. He may have a mantra, or mystic sound, which he concentrates upon, or a particular technique or attitude he is perfecting. If you have no *guru* or specific instructions, then here is a *raja yoga* exercise that can enhance inner life, making it tangibly real and opening inner doors of the mind. Use it to begin each meditation for the rest of your life.

**1. Feel the Body's Warmth:** Simply sit, quiet the mind, and feel the warmth of the body. Feel the natural warmth in the feet, in the legs, in the head, in the neck, in the hands and face. Simply sit and be aware of that warmth. Feel the glow of the body. This

is very easy, because the physical body is what many of us are most aware of. Take five, ten or fifteen minutes to do this. There is no hurry. Once you can feel this warmth that is created by the life force as it flows in and through the body's cells, once you can feel this all over the body at the same time, go within to the next step.

**2. Become Aware of the Nerve Currents:** The second step is to feel the nerve currents of the body. There are thousands of miles of nerve currents in each of us. Don't try to feel them all at once. Start with the little ones, with the feeling of the hands, thumbs touching, resting on your lap. Now feel the life force going through these nerves, energizing the body. Try to sense the even more subtle nerves that extend out and around the body about three or four feet. This may take a long time. When you have located some of these nerves, feel the energy within them. Tune into the currents of life force as they flow through these nerves. This is a subtle feeling, and most likely awareness will wander into some other area of the mind. When this happens, gently bring it back to your point of concentration, to feeling the nerves within the body and the energy within the nerves.

**3. Feel the Power Within the Spine:** The third step takes us deeper inside, as we become dynamically aware in the spine. Feel the power within the spine, the powerhouse of energy that feeds out to the external nerves and muscles. Visualize the spine in your mind's eye. See it as a hollow tube or channel through which life energies flow. Feel it with your inner feelings. It's there, subtle and silent, yet totally intense. It is a simple feeling. We can all feel it easily. As you feel this hollow spine filled with energy, realize that you are more that energy than you are the physical body through which it flows, more that pure energy than the emotions, than the thought force. Identify yourself with this energy and begin to live your true spiritual heritage on this Earth. As you dive deeper into that energy, you will find that this great power, your sense of awareness and your willpower are all one and the same thing.

**4. Become Aware of Awareness:** The fourth step comes as we plunge awareness into the essence, the center of this energy in the head and spine. This requires great discipline and exacting control to bring awareness to the point of being aware of itself. This state of being totally aware that we are aware is called *kaif*. It is pure awareness, not aware of any object, feeling or thought. Go into the physical forces that flood, day and night, through the spine and body. Then go into the energy of that, deeper into the vast inner space of that, into the essence of that, into the that of that, and into the that of that. As you sit in this state, new ener-

gies will flood the body, flowing out through the nerve system, out into the exterior world. The nature becomes very refined in meditating in this way. Once you are thus centered within yourself, you are ready to pursue a meditation, a mantra or a deep philosophical question.

### Tame Distraction

Throughout your inner investigations in meditation, cling to the philosophical principle that the mind doesn't move. Thoughts are stationary within the mind, and only awareness moves. It flows from one thought to another, as the free citizen of the world travels through each country, each city, not attaching himself anywhere.

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Meditation is the disciplined art of tuning in to the deepest and most subtle spiritual energies. It's not a fad. It's not a novelty. It's not something you do because your next-door neighbor does. It is sacred, the most sacred thing you can do on this planet, and it must be approached with great depth and sincerity. At these moments, we are seeking God, Truth, and actually controlling the forces of life and consciousness as we fulfill the very evolutionary purpose of life—the realization of the Self God. Unless we approach meditation in humility and wonder, we will not reach our goal in this life.



When you are able, through practice, to sit for twenty minutes without moving even one finger, your superconscious mind can begin to express itself. It can even reprogram your subconscious and change past patterns of existence. That is one of the wonderful things about inner life. That's why it's inner life—it happens from the inside.

If you just sit and breathe, the inner nerve system of the body of your psyche, your soul, begins to work on the subconscious, to mold it like clay. Awareness is loosened from limited concepts and made free to move vibrantly and buoyantly into the inner depths where peace and bliss remain undisturbed for centuries. However, if you move even a finger, you externalize the entire nervous system. Like shifting gears from high to

low, you change the intensity of awareness, and the outer nerve system then is active. Superconscious programming ceases, awareness returns to the body and the senses, and the external mind takes over. By sitting still again at this point, it is just a matter of a few minutes for the forces to quiet and awareness to soar in and in once again. Sitting quietly in this state, you will feel when the superconscious nerve system begins to work in the physical body. You may feel an entirely different flow through your muscles, your bones and your cells. Let it happen.

As you sit to meditate, awareness may wander into past memories or future happenings. It may be distracted by the senses, by a sound or by a feeling of discomfort in the body. This is natural in the early stages.

Gently bring awareness back to your point of concentration. Don't criticize awareness for wandering, for that is yet another distraction. Distractions will disappear if you become intensely interested and involved in your meditation. In such a state you won't even feel the physical body. You have gone to a movie, read a book or sat working on a project on your computer that was so engrossing you only later discovered your foot had fallen asleep for a half hour because it was in an awkward position. Similarly, once we are totally conscious on the inside, we will never be distracted by the physical body or the outside.

If distractions keep coming up in meditation over a long period of time, then perhaps you are not ready to meditate. There has to



be a point where distractions stop. Until then you are hooked very strongly into the instinctive or intellectual area of the mind, and the whole idea of meditation won't inspire you very much. Therefore, you need something to spur you on inwardly. In Hinduism when this occurs, the grace of the *satguru* is sought. By going to your guru openly, you receive *darshana*, a little extra power that moves awareness permanently out of the areas of distraction. You are then able to sit in inner areas for long periods of time. Distractions become fewer and fewer, for he has wrenched you out of the instinctive and intellectual areas and changed the energy flow within your body. Learn from Your Sleep

Get into the habit of meditating before sleep each night. If you catch yourself dropping off to sleep while sitting for meditation, know that your meditation is over. The best thing to do is to deliberately go to sleep, because the spiritual power is gone and has to be invoked or opened up again. After getting ready for bed, sit in the lotus position and have a dynamic meditation for as long as you can. When you feel drowsy, you may deliberately put your body to sleep in this way. Mentally say to yourself, "Prana in the left leg, flow, go to sleep. Prana in the right leg, flow, go to sleep. Prana in the left arm, flow, go to sleep. Prana in the right arm, flow, go to sleep. Torso prana, flow, go to sleep. Head filled with inner light, go to sleep." The first thing you know, it's morning.

The whole dream and sleep world is very interesting. Often we go into inner planes of consciousness at night. How do you know if you have been in meditation all through the night, studying at the inner-plane school in higher states of mind? You will wake up all of a sudden with no interim period of sleepiness. You wake up invigorated. There you are, as if you came out of nowhere back into external consciousness. Otherwise, you wake up through the subconscious dream world. You feel a little off-key, and you know that you have been in the dream or astral world or the realms of intellectual aggressiveness much of the night. Striving yoga students do go into inner-plane meditation schools for short periods of time during their sleeping hours. This occurs when the mind is a well-trained mind, a keen mind, a crystal-clear mind.

Perhaps by this time you have seen the clear white light, or less intense inner light, and you have seen how crystal clear and sharp it is. Each thought, each feeling, each action has to be crystal clear and sharp to maintain and bring through a balance of your consciousness to the external world. When this happens, you have control over these states of consciousness, so much so that you are your own catalyst, and you can slide into higher states and out to external states of consciousness without being disturbed by one or the other.

When we act and react in daily affairs, we dream at night. We are living in the external or the aggressive magnetic force, called *pingala*. Thus, we dream in pictures. Should a *yogi* live in the passive force, the magnetic indrawn force, called *ida*, he feels and emotes on the astral plane. He would have a fretful, eventful night, an emotional night. He would not dream in pictures as much as he would in feeling. When one is living in the pure spiritual force, *sushumna*, the primary life force, he flows from sleep into meditation. The meditator should strive to put his body to sleep consciously and deliber-

The sense of bhakti yoga, a sense of devotion, is extremely important on the path. Unless we have a great bhakti, a great devotion, we can easily be shaken from the spiritual path. It's the fuel that keeps us motivated. If we prepare our room before meditation by lighting an oil lamp or candle, a stick of incense, or only setting out a few fresh flowers, it puts us in a state of readiness; and for any serious thing that we do, we must prepare.



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ately, after balancing the external and internal magnetic forces. So, whether he is lying down in his body or sitting in the lotus posture, he is in deep meditation, going to schools of learning and schools of spiritual unfoldment within his own mind. In the morning, many of my students remember inner-plane class activities which occurred during the night, not as a dream but as their own experience. So, you can meditate while you sleep, but don't sleep while you are meditating!

### Clear the Subconscious

After you have practiced meditation for some time, your inner vision will become keen and clear. For a while there may be the feeling of arrival, that you have at last conquered life's cycles, that you are pure now and free at last. But soon, layer by layer, your past will begin to unfold itself to you as your subconscious mind shows you in vivid, pictorial form all the vibratory rates you have put into it in this life. Like a tape recorder, it begins to play back the patterns and vibrations of previous cause and effect.



Be like the spaceman high above the surface of the Earth looking at the odic forces of the cities. Look then, too, at the odic forces, the magnetic forces, that motivate your life within yourself and between people and you and things. Feel the actinic force flooding out from the central source of energy itself. And then turn awareness in upon itself. Simply be aware of being aware. Sit in dynamic bliss.

Since some of these memories and actions may not have been complimentary, you may try to avoid looking at them. The more you avoid facing them, the more apparent they will become. You might think that everyone is seeing them, but they are not. This natural phase of spiritual unfoldment can be a pitfall, for these associations and attachments of the past seem temporarily attractive as they pass before the mind's eye. Old desires, old friends, old and comfortable habits you thought were gone now come up to tempt awareness, to pull it back into a seemingly desirable past. This event should not be taken too seriously. It is natural and necessary, but you must avoid a fear of the process, which, in order to stop the unpleasant feedback, often brings people to stop their efforts at meditation. This is not the time to stop meditating. Nor is it the time to avoid the past. It is the time to fully review each year of your life that led you to where you are now.

As you remain inwardly poised, watching the images of life but remaining detached, they gradually fade away, leaving awareness free to dive ever deeper into superconscious realms. This sometimes intense experience brings you into renewed desire to live the kind

of life that does not produce distorted images. You become religious and consciously shape up your lifestyle according to the *yamas* and *niyamas*, so that the reverberation of each action is positive in the subconscious. You have seen the uncomplimentary results of living according to the moods and emotions of the instinctive mind and the senses, and that experience has taught a great lesson. In reviewing life according to this new guideline, you may change your profession, your address, your diet and values. You will undoubtedly find new friends, for it is essential to associate with people that are of good character. Choose your friends carefully, but don't get too closely attached. People clinging to people is one of the biggest deterrents to the life of meditation.

Generally as soon as someone gets on the path and starts meditating, he wants to tell everyone else how to do it even before he has learned himself. This socializing never produces inner results. Keep your meditation abilities and activities to yourself. Don't talk about inner things with anyone but your guru. When it comes others' time to turn within, they will do so naturally, just as you did. That is the law.



## Live a Harmonious Life

Good interpersonal relationships help the meditator a great deal, and meditation helps keep those relations harmonious. When we get along nicely with others, meditation becomes easy. If we have problems with other people, if we argue or disagree mentally and verbally, we must work exceedingly diligently in order to regain the subtlety of meditation. Poor interpersonal relationships are one of the biggest barriers, for they antagonize awareness, causing it to flow through the instinctive and intellectual forces. This puts stress and strain on the nerve system and closes inner doors to superconsciousness.

If we cannot get along with our fellow man, whom we watch closely, observing the expressions on his face and the inflections of his voice, how will we ever get along with the forces of the subconscious, which we cannot see, or the refined superconscious areas of the inner mind, when we face them in meditation? Obviously, we must conquer and harmonize all our relationships—not by working to change the other person, but by working with that other person within ourself, for we are only seeing in him what is in us. He becomes a mirror. We cannot allow the unraveling of the relationship by attempted outer manipulation, discussion or analysis to become a barrier to deeper meditation. Instead, we must internalize everything that needs change, work within ourselves and leave other people out of it. This helps to smooth interpersonal relationships; and as these relationships improve, so does our ability to meditate.

Our nerve system is just like a harp. It can be played by other people. They can cause many tones to be heard in our nerve system. All styles of music can be played on a harp, but no matter what kind of music is played, the harp remains the same. People can do all sorts of things to our nervous system, and make patterns of tone and color appear. This does not hurt the nervous system. It, like the harp, remains the same. The same nervous system can be played by our superconscious or by our passions. We can experience beautiful knowledge from within, which is the outgrowth of good meditation abilities, or experience a mental argument with another person. All tones are played at different times through the same nervous system. We want our nervous system to be played from the inside out through the beautiful rhythm of superconsciousness. This is bliss. We do not want to allow other people to affect our nerve system in a negative way, only in a positive way. That is why it is imperative for those on the path to be in good company.

## Realize that You Are Wonderful

Now we are in a new age. Everything is changing. Everything is different. We must believe that we can change by using our powers of meditation, for we are here, on the surface of this Earth, to value and fulfill our existence. Value yourself and your fellow man. Say to yourself again and again, “I am the most wonderful person in the whole world!” Then ask yourself, “Why? Because of my unruly subconscious? Not necessarily. Because of what I know intellectually? Not so. I am the most wonderful person in the world because of the great spiritual force that flows through my spine, head and body, and the energy within that, and the That within that.”

Know full well that you can realize the very essence of this energy in this life. Feel the spine and the power within it that gives independence, enthusiasm and control. Then say to yourself, over and over, “I am a wonderful person,” until you can fully and unreservedly believe it. Lean on your own spine. Depending on the greatness within is the keynote of this new age. Get your willpower going. If you find an unruly part of your nature, reprogram it, little by little, using the *yamas* and *niyamas* as your guideline. Live a dynamic, God-like life every day. Dance with Siva, live with Siva and merge with Siva. Get into this area of the mind called meditation. Make it a fundamental part of your life, and all forms of creativity, success

and greatness will find expression in your life. Everyone is on this planet for one purpose. That purpose will be known to you through your powers of meditation, through seeing and then finally realizing your Self at the very core of the universe itself.

## Enjoy Unbridled Inspiration

Concentration has to be practiced and perfected before meditation can begin. If you find that you are sitting and trying not to fall asleep for a half hour, you have only accomplished sitting and trying not to go to sleep for half an hour—and perhaps refraining from scratching your nose when it begins to itch. But that cannot be called meditation. Meditation is a transforming state of mind, really. A person once said to me, “Well, I concentrate my mind by reading a book, and when I’m reading, I don’t hear a thing.” This is not concentration, but attention, the first step to concentration. Concentration is thinking about one definite thing for a given length of time until you begin to understand what you are thinking about. What should we concentrate upon? Start with

Attention is awareness poised like a hummingbird over a flower. It doesn’t move. The flower doesn’t move, and awareness becomes aware of the flower—poised. The entire nerve system of the physical body and the functions of breath have to be at a certain rhythm in order for awareness to remain poised like a hummingbird over a flower. Since the physical body and our breath have never really been disciplined in any way, we have to begin by breathing rhythmically and diaphragmatically, so that we breathe out the same number of counts as we breathe in. After we do this over a long period of time—and you can start now—the body becomes trained, the external nerve system becomes trained, responds, and awareness is held at attention.



any solid object. Take your watch, for instance. Think about your watch. Think about the crystal. Think about the hands. Let your mind direct itself toward the mechanism of your watch, and then observe how your mind, after a few moments, begins to wander and play tricks on you. You may start thinking about alarm clocks or a noise in the street.

Each time your concentration period is broken by a distraction, you must start all over again. Breathe deeply and coordinate all the energies of your body so that you are not distracted by an itch or a noise. Direct your awareness once again to your watch. Before you know it, you will be thinking about a movie you saw four weeks ago and living through all the fantasies of it again without realizing that ten minutes of your time has gone by. Be careful and gentle with your awareness, however. Bring it back to the object of your concentration in a firm, relaxed manner and say to yourself, “I am the master of my thought.” Eventually, your awareness will begin to do just what you want it to.

Once you are able to direct your awareness, without wavering, upon one object, you will begin to understand what you are concen-

trating upon, and you will find that this state of understanding is the beginning of your meditation. You are more alive in this state than you were in the noisy condition of your mind before you began to concentrate, and you come forth from your meditation a little wiser than you were before you went in.

The next state of consciousness, which is attained when meditation has been perfected, is contemplation. In the contemplative state of awareness you will feel the essence of all life pouring and radiating through your body and through the object you have been meditating upon. When contemplation is sustained, the final step is samadhi, and that is finding or becoming your true Self, which is beyond all conditions of your mind, all phases of consciousness. Only after you have attained samadhi can you answer the question “Who am I?” from your own experience. Only then will you know that you are all-pervasive, and finally, in the deepest samadhi, that you are causeless, timeless, spaceless and that you have been able to realize this through a balance of your awakened inner and outer consciousness, a bringing together of the forces of your mind in yoga, or union.



# “Who Am I?” A Strategy for Self-Realization

“A conscious bliss ensues when one abides as the Self, by inquiring ‘What is the true import of I?’ This bliss is spontaneous, indestructible and limitless.” These are the words of Ramana Maharishi (1879–1950), the renowned sage of Arunachala, South India, whose widely popular approach to meditation is called Atma-vichara, or Self inquiry. It epitomizes the path of discovery propounded in the Advaita Vedanta teachings of the Smarta Sampradaya.

Ramana spoke little and defied all efforts to have his teachings distilled into a set of instructions for meditation, but much can be learned from the gems of wisdom that he did confer regarding the path of Self knowing. In the English translation of *Upadesa Manjari* (*A Bouquet of Spiritual Instruction*), published in 1939, the sage is asked: “What is the correct method of practice for the disciple to adopt and follow?” The answer: “In the first instance, it should be recognized that the Atman, or the Self, is not something existing separate and distinct from the seeker, which he has yet to obtain, as it were, from without. Considering further that there is nothing loftier or more sublime than the object of his quest, which is identical with himself, he that would earnestly try to attain Liberation should initially proceed to discriminate between what is permanent and abiding and what is not. By this discriminative insight, he should know beyond doubt and free from misconception what he really is, i.e., in what his real Being consists. Realizing thus his true and natural state, he should remain changeless, firmly established therein. This is the correct method of practice, or *sadhana*, and is called the Vichara Marga, which is pre-eminently instrumental in gaining direct and immediate knowledge of the Self.

“Jnana is the utter annihilation of the mind by making it realize its absolute identity with the Atman, or the Self, by incessant practice of dhyana (meditation) or *vichara* (inquiry in quest of the Self). Utter annihilation of the mind is synonymous with that state of pure

Being in which all effort (either to control or to direct it, which is necessary only if the mind is wayward or in any way subject to the influence of mundane existence) has finally ceased. Those who have attained that state never swerve from it. What is called Mauna, or Quiescence, is verily that state of pure Being. “In *sadhana*, one should pay particular attention to the following points:

(a) “If the aspirant would only devote every minute spent in vain thinking about objects, which constitute the not-Self, in earnest inquiry in quest of the Self, he would, in a very short time, attain Self-Realization.

(b) “Until the mind obtains a firm and steady hold on the state of pure Being, practice of profound meditation tinged with reli-

gious emotion (*bhavana*) is essential, for, otherwise, the mind becomes an easy prey to wayward thoughts or is overcome by sleep.

(c) “The aspirant must not waste his time in an endless and vain repetition of such scriptural dicta as ‘Sivo’ham’ (the Supreme Lord am I) or ‘Aham Brahmasmi’ (I am Brahman), which is considered characteristic of *nirgun-opasana*. Instead, the aspirant should, with the strength of mind he gains by such devout repetition, or *upasana*, practice Atmavichara, or investigation in quest of the Self even as he is, without the superimposition of such ideas as ‘I am Brahman,’ etc.

(d) “The excellence of the *sadhana*, or the method of practice, adopted consists essentially in not yielding, by every possible means,



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“I am not the physical body, nor am I the five organs of sense-perception; I am not the five organs of external activity, nor am I the five vital forces, nor am I even the thinking mind. “

Ramana Maharishi



SHUTTERSTOCK

“To inquire, ‘Who am I that is in bondage?’ and to know one’s real nature is alone Liberation.”

any scope for obsessing thoughts of any kind to enter into the mind.”

In his book *Who Am I?*, ca 1922, Sivaprakasam Pillai captured the famous discourse by that name which he heard Sri Ramana give twenty years earlier. Here are brief excerpts:

“Who am I? I am not the physical body, nor am I the five organs of sense-perception; I am not the five organs of external activity, nor am I the five vital forces, nor am I even the thinking mind. Neither am I that unconscious state of nescience that retains merely the subtle *vasanas* (latencies of the mind), being then free from the functional activity of the sense organs and of the mind, and being unaware of the existence of the objects of sense-perception.

“Therefore, summarily rejecting all the above mentioned physical adjuncts and their functions, saying, ‘I am not this; no, nor am I this, not this,’ that which then remains separate and alone by itself, that pure Awareness, verily am I. This Awareness is by its very nature Sat-Chit-Ananda (Existence-Consciousness-Bliss).

“By a steady and continuous investigation into the nature of the mind, the mind is transformed into That to which the ‘I’ refers, and that is verily the Self.

“Even when extraneous thoughts sprout up during such inquiry, do not seek to complete the rising thought, but, instead, deeply inquire within, ‘To whom has this thought occurred?’ No matter how many thoughts

thus occur to you, if you would, with acute vigilance, inquire immediately, as and when each individual thought arises, as to whom it has occurred, you would find it is to ‘me.’ If, then, you inquire, ‘Who am I?’ the mind gets introverted, and the rising thought also subsides. In this manner, as you persevere more and more in the practice of Self-inquiry, the mind acquires increasing strength and power to abide in its Source.”

Our thanks to Master Nome of the Society of Abidance in Truth ([www.SATRamana.org](http://www.SATRamana.org)) for providing the citations from the teachings of Sri Ramana Maharishi for this Educational Insight.



## Aspiring on the Spiritual Path

Excerpts from the  
Writings of Sri Chinmoy

No matter which path you follow for meditation, the first and foremost task is to try to make the mind calm and quiet. If the mind is constantly roaming, if it is all the time a victim of merciless thoughts, then you will make no progress whatsoever. The mind has to be made calm and quiet so that when the light descends from above, you can be fully conscious of it. In your conscious observation and conscious acceptance of light, you will enter into a profound meditation and see the purification, transformation and illumination of your life.

How will you make the mind calm and quiet? The mind has its own power, and right now this power is stronger than your present eagerness and determination to meditate. But if you can get help from your heart, then gradually you will be able to control your mind. The heart, in turn, gets constant assistance from the soul, which is all light and power. If you can keep your mind calm and quiet for ten or fifteen minutes, a new world will dawn within you.

**On the problem of falling asleep in meditation.** When you meditate you have to be absolutely dynamic. Do not allow sleepiness to enter into you. When you sit down to meditate, feel that you are entering into the battlefield where you have to fight against ignorance, imperfection and death.

The best thing is to breathe in deeply a few times before you meditate and make your whole body energetic. This dynamic energy will help you enter into meditation. If possible, take a small quantity of hot juice or hot milk before you begin your meditation also.

With each breath, try to feel that a stream of energy is entering into you. Then try to feel that you are breathing in through different parts of your body: your eyes, your ears, your forehead, your shoulders, the

crown of your head and so on. Feel that each of these places is a door, and when you breathe in feel that you are opening this door. At that time, energy enters into you from the Universal Consciousness. Then try to invoke the power aspect of the Supreme. Do not invoke peace or light; only try to bring forward divine power from within or bring it down from above.

Lethargy and sleep come during meditation because sincere interest is lacking. If sincere interest is there, there will be no tendency to sleep. When a student wants to be first in school, when he has a real, sincere interest, then he studies without being forced by his parents. You should

always try to be eager and enthusiastic about meditation. If you feel that you cannot meditate for half an hour, then plan to meditate for ten minutes. Then you will feel, "Oh, only ten minutes. Easily I can do that." If your goal is very near, then you will give it all your energy.

**On the necessity of meditating every day.** If you are serious about your spiritual life, then you have to meditate at least once a day. If you are very enthusiastic, you can meditate three times a day—early in the morning, at noon or during your lunch hour, and in the evening. Your morning and evening meditations can be for a



SRI CHINMOY CENTERS

"Do you need happiness? Then do just three things: meditate regularly, smile soulfully and love untiringly."

Sri Chinmoy

## Is Vegetarianism Vital To Success in Meditation?

Sri Chinmoy's Response

Purity is of paramount importance for an aspirant. This purity we must establish in the body, in the vital and in the mind. When we eat meat, the aggressive animal consciousness enters into us. Our nerves become agitated and restless, and this can interfere with our meditation. If a seeker does not stop eating meat, generally he does not get subtle experiences or subtle visions.

The mild qualities of fruits and vegetables help us to establish in our inner life, as well as in our outer life, the qualities of sweetness, softness, simplicity and purity. If we are vegetarians, this helps our inner being to strengthen its own existence. Inwardly, we are praying and meditating; outwardly, the food we are taking from Mother Earth is helping us, too, giving us not only energy but also inspiration.

Many spiritual seekers have come to the conclusion that a vegetarian is in a position to make quicker progress in the spiritual life. But along with a vegetarian diet, one must pray and meditate. If one has aspiration, the vegetarian diet will help considerably; the body's purity will help one's inner aspiration to become more intense and more soulful.

These passages are drawn from Sri Chinmoy's Meditation, Man-Perfection in God-Satisfaction, with permission from the publisher, Aum Publications, Jamaica, New York.



SHUTTERSTOCK

longer time, for fifteen minutes or half an hour, whereas your noon meditation can be as short as five or ten minutes. If it is not possible to feed your soul three times a day, then please feed it at least once. Feel that the soul is a little divine child. If you don't feed the divine child within you, it will not be able to grow and manifest your inner divine qualities and your soul's possibilities.

It is better to meditate well just once a day in the morning than to sit five or six times a day with your eyes closed and just have pleasant thoughts drifting through your head. Before the sun rises, the earth-consciousness is not yet agitated. The

world has not yet entered into its daily turmoil. Nature is calm and quiet and will help you meditate. Whether you meditate in the morning or the evening, it is of paramount importance to have a fixed time for your meditation.

**On the benefits of group meditation.** When you meditate with others, you can be of real help to them, and they can be of real help to you. Nobody meditates well every day. Let us say that today you are in a very high state of consciousness, while the person who is sitting beside you is not in his highest consciousness. If both of you are meditating together, your aspiration and

even your very presence will inspire and lift up that person. Then, tomorrow it may happen that you are not inspired to go high, whereas the other person is in a high consciousness. At that time he will be able to lift you up. So, collective meditation is meant for mutual help.

During collective meditation try to feel that others are not separate entities. Feel that you are the only person meditating, and that you are entirely responsible for the meditation. It is always advisable that the disciples of one spiritual master meditate only with those on their own path or with those who have not yet chosen a path.





# The Ultimate Guide to Hindu Festivals

Hindu tradition has created a whole year of festivals, vibrant, colorful and joyous—to remember them all, you must *Follow the Hindu Moon*

AS A HINDU WOMAN LIVING IN SILICON Valley, USA, I found myself challenged by the difficult tasks of explaining a tradition, accurately relating a mythological tale, and celebrating our festivals the right way with my American child and friends. I needed a resource that would help me with the stories, recipes and prayers that make up a Hindu festival,” confides Soumya Sitaraman in the introduction to *Follow the Hindu Moon*. Such motivation prompted long trips to India filled with careful scriptural research and intimate interviews with elders and priests, resulting in this two-volume set explaining the what, where, when, why and how of every South Indian festival observed by the people of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Wow.

Soumya describes her books as “a cultural lifeline for the growing number of Hindus scattered across the globe.” She explains, “I seek to provide the reader with a means of applying this traditional ideology in contemporary life.”

*Book 1: Celebrate* explains the meaning and significance behind each festival, recounts the stories behind it and offers detailed walkthroughs for setting up and celebrating it. There are shopping lists, preferred flowers, cooked offerings, feast menus, auspicious things to do and when, prayers to offer and how to organize it all, complete with checklists and cheat sheets—all presented in great detail to assist the family in their celebrations. The book also contains a start-to-finish guide for performing puja, from simple to elaborate, including the meaning behind every procedure.

*Book 2: Understand* presents an overview of the cosmology behind the Hindu festival calendar and culture, the Gods who are praised, and detailed guides to festoons, decorations and etiquette. It includes over 150 pages of recipes for traditional festival dishes and sweet and savory offerings. No question is left unanswered. The level of detail is astounding, whether it be how to

**Rites with lights:** (right) an elaborate offering of fruits and goodies; (above right) a tray of gooseberries fashioned into lights, a traditional offering for Uddana Dwadashi Tulasi Puja in November-December



To make the salty ven pongal with the rest of the rice  
To the other half of the rice, add salt and cook with a little milk or water.  
1. Garnish with finely chopped ginger, black pepper, asafoetida, mustard seeds, cumin, cashews and curry leaves fried in ghee.  
2. Add some extra ghee as you stir the mixture. Stir until the consistency is smooth and even.  
Once the pongal is made, carry the ponga paanai to the place where the Surya pooja is being performed. Place both the sakkani pongal and ven pongal or maha neivedya outdoors on the kolam under the sugarcane tripod or on the central kolam. Set the pot down so that the face of Surya on your ponga paanai is looking at the rising sun due east. Arrange any other traditional delicacies like vadas, payasam, etc. beside or around the ponga paanai.



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**Festival flair:** (clockwise from above) Instructions for a salty rice dish for Pongal, a harvest thanksgiving festival in January; children dance around a rice-powder kolam, drawn in the street to signify goodwill, respect the space and serve as a decoy for ants; Deities in a home are decorated for a festival; instructions for tying the saradu thread during Raksha Bandhan; detailed instructions for serving a traditional meal on a banana leaf



**General serving etiquette**  
1. Make sure any invited Brahmins (priests) or guests eat first.  
2. While serving, follow the diagrammatic order on p 91, 95, 97 or 99, depending on which state you are from or live in, using the menu as a sequence guide.  
3. Offer plain betel leaves and nut along with chunnam, edible gypsum, arranged beautifully on a platter as a digestive after the meal. Paan is the north Indian equivalent of this digestive.  
**Banana-leaf eating etiquette**  
1. Sprinkle water on the leaf and wipe it.  
2. Lift the leaf and let the water drip on the table or floor below. This helps the leaf secure itself to the surface of the table and prevents it from flying off or moving around while you eat.  
3. Wait until all dishes are served, including rice and ghee, before you start eating.  
4. Madhuram, a sweet, always comes first to signify an auspicious, happy day. Madhura rasi is heavy. At the beginning of the meal, when our agni is strong, it is digested more easily than at the end of the meal when the agni is already burdened.  
5. Usually people eat with their right hand.  
6. You must eat with all five fingers. Not to do so is a sign of lower energy.  
7. Licking, slurping and sucking one's fingers are considered distasteful.  
8. Burping, however, is considered a natural after-effect and is not really frowned upon!  
9. You should never reach out to serve yourself food with the hand you eat with.  
10. Women do not need to pray or say thank you after a meal.  
11. After eating, some communities insist that the eater get up without folding or removing the leaf, others insist the eater clear his or her own leaf. Check with your community elders on your particular etiquette.



Serving etiquette demands that the food is served with the right hand. Food must be served without spilling. Gently place food on the leaf or plate by tipping the ladle inwards, letting the thumb on your right hand drop.

**The saradu threads**  
• The yellow saradu is prepared with nine knots and a fragrant flower in the centre.  
• One has to be made for each participating woman or girl in the house.  
• Place it in the pooja near the goddess where it will be easily retrievable after the pooja. Some families place the saradu right up front, others perform the Vinayaka pooja, kalasa pooja, ghantaa pooja, diyanam and avahanam and only then place the saradu near the goddess. This is probably because her energy is infused in the purna kumbha only after the official avahanam or welcome.

The nambu thread is tied on the right wrist.







Younger generations learn by participating enthusiastically in events that distinguish our culture.



## Introduction

Woven into every Hindu festival are the joys of togetherness, the colour and rustling of silk, the fragrance of strung and loose flowers, the texture of sandal paste and rice flour, and the taste of the mouth-watering delicacies prepared as special offerings to the gods. These celebrations reinforce our sense of community. They bring families and friends together in a joint acknowledgement of our relationship with ourselves, each other, and the world around us.

**Whens and wherefores:** (clockwise from above) Youth participate in a chariot festival; a boy prepares a clay murti for Vinayaga Chaturthi; water vessels for puja are explained; diagram of how Earth's precession affects the timing of the Sun's northward movement over the past 5,000 years; the lunar month, central to festival calculations, is explained from each South Indian tradition

### The lunar month

The lunar month was considered one day and night of the pits, departed ancestors. The synodic lunar month, the time between two successive new moons – amnavasai—or two successive full moons – purnami, is approximately 29.5 days. It is longer than the sidereal month, where it takes 27.32 days for the moon to go around the earth. This is because the moon has to go around the earth by more than one revolution to keep up with the earth, which is constantly rushing forward in its orbit around the sun. And this is why, although there are thirty tithis, lunar days, to a lunar month, each lunar month by the panchanga does not begin with the new moon as expected in a synodic lunar month.

Telugu and Kannada panchangas follow the synodic lunar month. The day after an amnavasai, the new month begins. The full moon occurs in the middle of the month. Ugadi therefore begins the day after the new moon that precedes the vernal equinox and the sankranti associated with it. Like Ugadi, lunar months begin with the new moon that precedes the relevant sankranti: the transition of the sun into the relative position of a constellation.

Of the twenty-seven nakshatras in Vedic astronomy, only twelve of them rise with the full moon. The month, irrespective of the calendar system, is named after the star or nakshatra with which the full moon rises. For example, the month Chaitra is so called because the full moon rises with the Chaitra star, Spica—Alpha Virginis in that month.

Tamizh calendars have chosen to track the sun and begin the year with the Mesha sankranti. The month, according to the Tamizh panchanga, actually begins on sankranti and both the new moon and the full moon occur somewhere in the middle, during the month. The twelve solar transitions (sankrantis) that make up one year correlate with thirteen lunar cycles of waxing and waning. These solar months, rasis, are adjusted to thirteen new moons in one year according to our current luni-solar system of calculation by arriving at a five-year least common denominator based on the twelve-year cycle of Jupiter.

Under normal circumstances, there is one new moon, amnavasai, every solar month. Once every two-and-a-half years, the new moon occurs immediately after a sankranti and before the time the sun moves through the constellation and enters the next sign of the zodiac, the moon has completed its full cycle and is in its new moon phase again. This causes a minor problem as the solar months are hitched to the lunar months in a certain sequence.



A typical Adhika maasa, the extra lunar month caused by the occurrence of two moon cycles between one sankranti and the next

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### Panchamritam

This is a delicious and tantalising medley of five sweet flavours. The ingredients, mashed together, are smeared on an idol when performing a full abhishekam. For an ordinary puja in one's house, it is symbolically offered to the deity and consumed after the puja as prasadam. Panchamritam is made with milk, curd, honey, ghee, and sugar.

### Making the panchamritam

This is a delicious version for home pujas that everybody loves to eat by the handful.

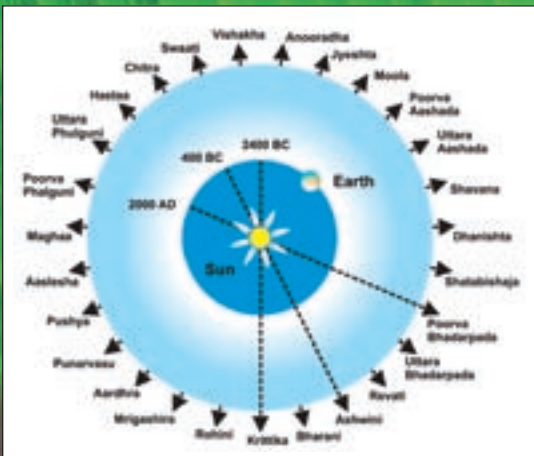
Mash overripe yellow bananas with dates. Add honey, crystal diamond sugar, raisins, powdered jaggery or country brown sugar, and ghee. Garnish with cardamom for added flavor.

### Panchapathra-udrini

The panchapathra is a small cylindrical container originally made of an alloy of five metals. Water meant to be used during a puja is spooned out of this vessel using a stylised curved spoon, the udrini.



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draw a *kolam* or weave a garland, what to wear for each celebration, what mantra to chant and when, or how a festival lunch in Andhra Pradesh differs from one in Tamil Nadu. Each volume has its own index and a thorough glossary, defining all non-English words in simple terms.

The author concludes, “Contemporary lifestyles are hectic and often isolated, especially as more individuals are adopting the modern nuclear family unit. The community that was the mainstay of culture is fast disappearing into a virtual one where individuals seek to make their connections through the Internet. Globalization and fragmentation of large families have resulted in a disconnect. [The channels traditionally used] to impart cultural and ritual expertise

to succeeding generations are hindered by physical distance, new ideologies and an unforgiving pace of life. While people continue to celebrate festivals with great gusto and elaborate attention, many of the meaningful elements of a traditional celebration are lost, especially when one is removed from the warmth and knowledge of the parent community one belongs to.” Soumya Sitaraman has provided excellent documentation of these traditions in a simple, accessible format which will help modern families integrate ancient customs into everyday life. Infused with a warm, personal tone, *Follow the Hindu Moon* is a tribute to every family that worships together.

FOLLOW THE HINDU MOON, A GUIDE TO THE FESTIVALS OF SOUTH INDIA, BY SOUMYA SITARAMAN, RANDOM HOUSE INDIA. RS. 3,150; 908 PAGES. [WWW.HINDUMOON.COM](http://WWW.HINDUMOON.COM)



**Harvest rite:** A traditional Pongal puja with its tripod of sugar canes and a beautiful spread of fruits, vegetables, cooked dishes and flowers to offer in gratitude to the Sun

# A Tribute to Hinduism

FROM TIME IMMEMORIAL, INDIA HAS been synonymous with spiritual knowledge and has attracted numberless philosophers, poets, historians, scientists and travelers. Some have been able to physically visit her sacred land, while others have imbibed translations of her rich and imaginative literature from afar. Though political leaders have led the world into wars and imperialism, ancient India's spiritual wisdom has provided an uplifting

counterpoint, profoundly influencing Western scientific and imaginative thought, arts and literature. Scientists, scholars, poets, writers and philosophers have paid the highest compliment to India's genius in metaphysics, religion, art, language and culture by incorporating many of her ideas and theories into their own work. *A Tribute to Hinduism* by Sushama Londhe is a rich collection of Western and Eastern thinkers' inspired gems on Hinduism and India.

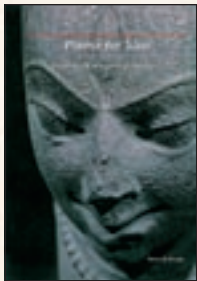
A TRIBUTE TO HINDUISM, BY SUSHAMA LONDHE, PRAGUN PUBLICATIONS, NEW DELHI, INDIA. RS. 895; 550 PAGES. [WWW.ATRIBUTETOHINDUISM.COM](http://WWW.ATRIBUTETOHINDUISM.COM)



# Poems for Siva

THE SEVENTH-CENTURY MYSTIC, POET and yogini known as Karaikkalammayar, “Mother of Karaikkal,” is one of the 63 Saivite Tamil saints, *nayanars*, codified in Sekkilar's 12th-century *Periyapuranam*. Of the few *nayanars* who gave the world a written legacy, she was perhaps the earliest; her poems mark the start of the literature later arranged into the highly venerated *Tirumurai*. In *Poems for Siva*, Peter de Bruijn brings forward Karaikkalammayar's works in Tamil, with English translation, poignantly describing, praising and supplicating Siva. Over 35 color and black-and-white photographs are included, showing Indian, Sri Lankan, Khmer and Southeast Asian sculptures and paintings of Siva dating from the 6th to 17th centuries.

POEMS FOR SIVA, BY PETER DE BRUIJN, DHYANI PUBLICATIONS, ROTTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS. € 35 (BLACK AND WHITE EDITION € 25); 106 PAGES. [WWW.DHYANI.NL](http://WWW.DHYANI.NL)







**Excess is harmful:** Dr. T. Colin Campbell writes, “Our virtual reverence for protein, especially of the animal kind, is one of the most serious dietary misadventures of all time.”

HEALTH

# The Protein Nemesis

A modern-day emphasis on animal protein has steered the human diet in a dangerous direction

SOME YEARS AGO, DR. CAMPBELL received a telephone call from a distraught woman who told him, “I have a strong history of breast cancer in my family.” She said her mother and grandmother had both died from the disease, and her sister had been diagnosed with it. “I can’t help but be afraid for my nine-year-old daughter,” she confided. Dr. Campbell, a nutrition scientist at Cornell University, told her that his research concluded that a change in diet was her best option to dramatically reduce the risk of the nation’s three greatest health-related killers: heart disease, diabetes and cancer.

You can read about his findings in *The China Study: Startling Implications for Diet, Weight Loss and Long-Term Health* (2005). The book, which reads like a novel, was co-authored by his son, Thomas M. Campbell, to whom he credits the book’s readability.

The China Study

In the most comprehensive study of health and nutrition ever conducted, the China Study project was arranged through Cornell University, Oxford University and the Chinese Academy of Preventive Medicine in the early 1980s to examine the eating habits

of 6,500 people in China and Taiwan.

Central to the inquiry detailed in *The China Study* is an in-depth discussion of protein—especially animal protein. Dr. Campbell observed that people who eat a plant-based diet are generally healthier. While the average man in China consumes only one tenth the animal protein, half the fat, but 20% more calories than an American, Americans are on average 25% fatter. At the same time, Chinese who consume excess animal food have the highest rates of Western diseases such as cancer, heart disease and diabetes.

During his early-1960s nutrition study in the Philippines, Dr. Campbell was still operating under the conventional medical assumption that a lack of protein—especially animal protein—causes malnutrition. He writes, “In this project, however, I uncovered a dark secret. The children of the wealthiest families, who ate the highest-protein diets, were the ones most likely to get liver cancer!”

This correlated with lab research in which Dr. Campbell and his team discovered that, in mice and other rodents predisposed to liver cancer, “nutrients from animal-based foods increased tumor development, while nutrients from plant-based foods decreased tumor development.” Dr. Campbell, who was raised on a dairy farm, says, “The safe proteins were from plants, including wheat and soy. With these, we could turn off tumor growth. This information countered everything I had been taught. It was heretical to say that protein wasn’t healthy, let alone say it promoted cancer. It was a defining moment in my career.”

Diseases of Affluence

Dr. Campbell and his team expanded their research beyond the China Study and the protein/cancer link to include other nutrients (e.g., carbohydrates, cellulose and dietary fiber). Part Two of *The China Study* surveys a wide range of human diseases and conditions—heart disease, obesity, cancer, diabetes, autoimmune, kidney, eye diseases and osteoporosis—and the medical profession’s failure to effectively address them. Dr. Campbell puts it bluntly: “Here in America, we are affluent, and we die certain deaths because of it.” Americans and people in affluent European nations are becoming sick at unprecedented rates. Men in the US have a 47% chance of getting cancer, while the rate among women is 38%. Nearly a third of US adults are obese, and one in three Americans will die from the biggest killer: heart disease. But rather than concentrate on low-cost prevention through prescribing diet changes, doctors prefer—and hospitals encourage—expensive surgeries that help their financial bottom line.

Osteoporosis, considered a major health concern in the US, is much lower in China,

where most people get their calcium from vegetables. The US has one of the highest per-capita dairy consumption rates in the world, due in no small part to agribusiness’ claims that the calcium in cow’s milk and cheese strengthens bones and helps prevent osteoporosis. A study conducted in 2000 showed that the rate of hip fractures for women age 50 in the US is among the highest in the world. Animal protein suppresses the body’s production of an active form of vitamin

D. By consuming high levels of dairy products, studies conclude, you are actually inviting osteoporosis, not combating it.

[From the Editor: We do not advocate that lacto-vegetarians stop consuming dairy products as a source of protein. The levels

of casein (milk protein) used in these tests were far higher than those normally consumed. It will be important to see whether modern-day laboratories corroborate Dr. Campbell’s findings with casein and other animal proteins in future studies.]

Eating Right

The authors give simple advice: By basing your diet on whole, plant-based foods, you can live longer, lose weight, lower your risk of cancer, prevent diabetes, keep your bones strong, avoid stroke, lower your blood pressure, reduce the risk of Alzheimer’s disease and enjoy many other health benefits. Preventing and even curing some diseases may be as simple as proper nutrition.

Here are the book’s Eight Principles of Food and Health: 1) Nutrition represents the combined activities of countless food substances. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. 2) Vitamin supplements are not a panacea for good health. 3) There are no nutrients in animal-based foods that are not better provided by plants. 4) Genes do not determine diseases on their own. Genes function only by being activated, or expressed; and nutrition plays a critical role in determining which genes, good and bad, are expressed. 5) Nutrition can substantially control the adverse effects of noxious chemicals. 6) The same nutrition that prevents disease in its early stages (before diagnosis) can also halt or reverse disease in its later stages (after diagnosis). 7) Nutrition that is truly beneficial for one chronic disease will support health across the board. 8) Good nutrition creates health in all areas of our existence. For those challenged with making a transition, the authors suggest, “Give it one month. You’ve been eating cheeseburgers your whole life; a month without them won’t kill you.”

By Mark Hawthorne, author of *Striking at the Roots: A Practical Guide to Animal Activism*, [www.strikingattheroots.com](http://www.strikingattheroots.com)

## Summary: Whole Plant Food Is the Key to Good Health

Edited excerpts from an interview with Dr. Campbell

IN OUR ANIMAL EXPERIMENTS, WE determined that casein [a protein found in milk and cheese], but not soy or wheat protein, promoted cancer development. However, in these experiments, casein promoted cancer development only when in excess of the amount that is needed, i.e., above about 8-10%. From 10% to 20%, for example, we observed a linear relationship. “Please keep in mind a couple of ideas: First, protein is an essential nutrient and, from these experiments, casein can serve this purpose; about 10% is needed for growth of the young and about 5% is needed for adult maintenance. Second, these experiments investigated casein as an isolated nutrient (generally unlike what it is when consumed as part of a whole food). Third, although we did not test other animal proteins, I am confident, using other indirect evidence, that other animal proteins, when tested in isolation, will show the same effect. “As a corollary observation, a meal of varied plant based foods will provide about 8-10% protein, plenty enough to meet the requirement for protein. But 95% of human diets contain 11-22% protein. If the experimental data are relevant for humans (a large body of evidence suggests that this is true), then most humans have diets that could be enhancing cancer development by consuming protein in excess of the amount needed. “The excess protein being consumed is clearly coming from animal-based foods.



COURTESY T. COLIN CAMPBELL

**Prominent nutritional expert:** Dr. T. Colin Campbell of Cornell University

That is, about 70-80% of the total dietary protein is provided by animal-based foods.

“There is no nutritional need for this excess protein. Consuming animal-based foods not only sustains higher levels of dietary protein, which may have its own protein-specific adverse effects, but in doing so, an almost endless variety of other adverse effects occur because of parallel changes in the intakes of a variety of other nutrients.

“If one exceeds the need for protein by using protein-enriched products from plants (e.g., soy and vegetable protein isolates), this, too, could cause similar problems, although perhaps not to the same degree. This may seem somewhat tortuous logic, but it is not. It’s really quite simple.

“It is necessary, however, to fully comprehend each of the above statements to get its full meaning. Together, they question why we have so long believed that protein is so important. Indeed, our virtual reverence for protein, especially of the animal kind, is one of the most serious dietary misadventures of all time.”

LISTEN TO THE FULL AUDIO INTERVIEW WITH DR. CAMPBELL IN THE HINDUISM TODAY DIGITAL EDITION AT [WWW.HINDUISMTODAY.COM/DIGITAL](http://WWW.HINDUISMTODAY.COM/DIGITAL)

READ MORE AT THE FOLLOWING WEBSITES: [WWW.CHINASTUDY.ORG](http://WWW.CHINASTUDY.ORG) [WWW.CANCERPROJECT.ORG](http://WWW.CANCERPROJECT.ORG)

## How much is too much? Counting protein calories

PROTEIN CONSUMPTION IS REFERRED TO AS A PERCENTAGE of daily calories. One gram of protein contains 4 calories. Calorie requirements are based on age, weight and activity. The Recommended Daily Allowance is 0.8 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight. Thus, for a moderately active, 68 kg

(150 lb), 5’11” male consuming a daily weight maintenance diet of 2,160 calories, 10 percent of those calories equates to an ideal of 54 grams of protein. Most informative is how little food is required to meet the daily need. Needs and amounts vary by activity and portion size. Excess is flagged in red in below.

One Day’s Consumption: Western Vegan

- 1 bowl of raisin bran; 1 cup soy milk 12 g
- 1 veggie burger, whole wheat bun 20 g
- 1 cup pasta, 1 cup vegetables and beans 22 g
- Total 54 g**

Lacto-Vegetarian: Light South Indian

- fresh fruit, 10 almonds, 1/2 cup yogurt 8 g
- 1 cup brown rice, 1 cup mung dal and vegetable curry; 1/4 cup yogurt 16 g
- iddli (2, 1/2 rice-1/2 urad dal), sambar 20 g
- chai (1/2 cup milk with tea) twice a day 8 g
- Total 52 g**

Lacto-Vegetarian: Robust Western

- 1 bowl of raisin bran; 1 cup whole milk 12 g
- whole wheat cheddar cheese (2 oz) sandwich; corn chips with hummus-sour cream dip 32 g
- Baked potato with 1/2 cup ricotta cheese, 1/2 cup grilled tempeh (soy), salad 37 g
- Total 81 g**



# Protein in Your Diet

Ayurvedic doctors say the plant kingdom should be your primary source of protein

**A**N ABUNDANCE OF ANIMAL DATA AND RESEARCH has proved beyond a doubt that an excess of protein in the diet creates more cancers. Fifty to sixty grams of protein is enough for a normal, healthy 160-pound person. An excess beyond that creates many imbalances. If you plant tumors in animals and give them excessive protein, the tumors start growing. If you cut down the protein, the tumors shrink. This experiment has also been done with sugars and fats, mainly saturated fats. Exercise also shrinks the tumors. It is a complex issue; protein is not the only culprit.

I am from the mountain part of India, Himachal Pradesh. Milk is consumed there, but very little. The average cow will only milk for three to four months, giving only one to two liters of milk per day for the whole family. This is raw milk, not what we are using today. The homogenization of milk—making the fat molecules smaller and symmetrical—is a problem. The pesticides, insecticides and hormones we feed the animals are other problems.

I personally don't use dairy at all, because I'm allergic to it; but yogurt has been shown to enhance peoples' life span—for example, the people living in the Andes. Research indicates that yogurt helps to cut down tumors and cancers, heart disease, diabetes, etc.

In Ayurvedic medicine, milk has been considered a very sacred food. I respect that, but we should not use too much dairy. If you

**M**Y OBSERVATIONS COME FROM HELPING THOUSANDS of people with diabetes, high blood pressure, arthritis, psoriasis and other skin problems, obesity, chronic rheumatoid arthritis and terminal conditions—the final stages of cancer or HIV. They are all meat eaters. Eating animal protein is so dangerous for the body and emotions.

My students have done research. A cow at the slaughterhouse hears the sounds made by those being slaughtered, and fear hormones are created in the cow. When a person eats this cow, what is he eating? He is eating fear. After working with thousands of patients all over the world, I have observed that everyone eating meat suffers from multiple emotional upsets, such as fear, depression, anxiety and especially anger. So, if this effects the emotional body, what about the spiritual body? If you are eating meat, can you concentrate? My master says: "If you want to meditate, you have to sit in a very quiet place, in good surroundings." If your stomach is a graveyard, is it possible to meditate? A vegetarian diet is the only real prescription for physical health, mental health, emotional health and spiritual development. It's very, very hard for people who eat meat to become spiritual.

Let me share with you my personal experience regarding dairy products. I am 100 percent vegetarian and do not take milk or cream. My lineage is 2,500 years old. My master has never tasted milk in his life, and he lived to be 141. Every master before him was vegetarian, and none of them drank milk. They all lived up to 125 to 140 years. I take lot of mung beans and vegetables. This is my basic food.



Punjabis are very heavy milk users, and they have the highest rate of heart attacks in the world—fifty percent of the people suffer heart attacks. But I've never seen the mountain people of Himachal Pradesh express a pattern of dying from heart attacks. They consume a small amount of animal protein on ceremonial occasions, but their main diet is fruits, vegetables, beans, rice, nuts, seeds and what they grow; and they do a lot manual labor, which also cuts down disease processes.

DR. VIRENDER SODHI, who holds an M.D. (Ayurveda) from India and an N.D. from Bastyr College of Naturopathic Medicine, USA, has been treating patients for 27 years. [www.ayurvedicscience.com](http://www.ayurvedicscience.com)



Milk or milk products—and especially hard cheeses like swiss cheese—cannot be digested easily by our natural enzymes. Whatever you cannot digest will be transformed into *ama* (toxic residue), which goes into circulation. If a person is a vegetarian but is still taking lots of milk that is not digested, it moves into his or her system and causes rheumatoid arthritis. It goes into the blood and creates skin disease, psoriasis. If that *ama* goes into the liver, it creates problems there. As for diabetes, what happens? Too much milk, too much cheese, creates a block in the pancreas. And what about heart problems? As soon as I stop people from taking milk products, their risk of heart disease goes down by 92 percent.

An average person may need only 20 to 30 grams of protein a day. Someone who works very hard, including mental work, may require 40, 50 or even 60 grams of protein per day. And a sportsman, a gymnast, someone doing yoga postures or someone overworking his body may require 80, 90, or 100 grams of protein, but it should be from the plant kingdom. And that is possible if we plan the diet properly.

DR. PANKAJ NARAM is the founder of Ayushakti, has practiced for 24 years and is a world-traveling missionary for vegetarianism and the principles of ayurveda. [www.ayushakti.com](http://www.ayushakti.com)

Hinduism Today sought views from two practicing ayurvedic physicians on the issues raised in *The China Study* to balance out the laboratory and statistical picture. Here are edited excerpts of interviews with Dr. Virender Sodhi and Dr. Pankaj Naram. (Listen to their full audio interviews in our Digital Edition.)

# True Pluralism for a Truly Pluralistic Society

Let us not allow the noble goal of pluralism to become diluted into a mere armistice

BY JAY LAKHANI

**I**NTERFAITH DIALOGUE IN THE UNITED Kingdom, where I live, commenced with an attitude of religions tolerating each other. This was clearly a derogatory attitude, as it suggested "giving other religions permission to exist." The dialogue has moved forward and now parades as "respecting other religions." This improved wording seems to be a mature attitude suited to the needs of a multi-faith society, but it is actually way off target; it merely camouflages and shields an exclusionist, non-negotiable agenda of the Abrahamic faiths. A forthright expression of their attitude would be, "I know that my faith alone is right and the others are in error, but I will not make much ado about it." At best, this approach could reduce chances of open confrontation between people of different faiths, but it will be hardly a prescription for community cohesion! Recently, Pope Benedict XVI declined to participate in a multifaith prayer meeting because that could give an impression that the Catholic Church considered all religious traditions equally valid! The message seems to be, "Catholicism alone is right, all other religions are in error."

One of the greatest challenges we face in this century is how to minimize strife perpetrated in the name of religions. Continuing to harbor exclusionist agendas is hardly the way forward. The solution lies in a word that sounds innocuous at first: pluralism. In a nutshell, pluralism means an acceptance that there can be many pathways for making spiritual progress. Spiritual progress can be made in a theistic mode; in a non-theistic mode, and even in a non-religious mode. We are all different, and this difference shows up in the way we relate to ideas of spirituality. Each founder of a religion promoted a unique pathway for spiritual progress, tailored to suit the needs of his particular society. Over time these teachings became the various religions. Every religion can be viewed as suited to the needs of its context. The destination they promise may be absolute, but the pathways themselves cannot be absolute. They are always relative, because they have to relate to people.

When any religion attempts to impose its doctrines on others, it turns into an explosive device. One would expect that mature theologians would recognize the seriousness of the situation and eagerly affirm that there can be many roads leading to spiritual progress, their own religion being a valid and important one. But



my experience suggests otherwise.

Theologians firmly committed to exclusivism claim to have a monopoly on the Divine. God has been so well encapsulated within their system of doctrines and dogmas that how could He escape and make an appearance in another religion? If any system, however esoteric, manages to capture God within its framework, then by definition that system has superseded God. It is a sound conclusion that a God easily confined by an intellectual religious system is hardly worth bothering with.

Pluralism is often thought to imply relativism, giving it a bad reputation in religion studies since many believe it means that there is no absolute and hence anything goes. But pluralism has never suggested that. It simply states that there will be diversity in prescriptions adopted by different groups, because they reflect different starting points. This is not relativism; it is a recognition of the role and limitations of contextual elements that permeate the religious process.

Pluralism is not an acceptance that all religions are the same. Claiming that all religions are the same would be ludicrous. Nor should pluralism be viewed as an attempt to homogenize world religions. All religions are distinctly different, each valuable and sacred in its own uniqueness. What is needed is not watering down religions but rather developing deeper insight into them. Such maturity allows us to appreciate the scope of religious teachings while recognizing their limitations. Until we see religions once again becoming the cohesive force in our truly pluralistic society, striving for a reformation is essential.

One casualty from the rise of pluralism will be the proselytizing agendas of missionary religions. I suspect that this is the real reason why there is such resistance to the simple but potent concept of pluralism. Arguably the evangelizing lobby is the most active and powerful force in most organized religions. Pluralism will greatly restrict their fire power. I suspect that it is not spiritual but monetary considerations that are blocking the acceptance of pluralism by the modern world.

I am labelled an "evangelical pluralist" in the interfaith circuit in the United Kingdom. Some evangelist Christians shun me and tell me that I am a more forceful evangelist than they could ever be! I treat this as a compliment, because it suggests that broader ideas of spirituality are winning over the narrow ones. Pluralism is not a new form of religion; it is simply the recognition of religion's inherently varied roles and nature.

Hindus recognize the virtues of this approach. The *Katha Upanishad* states: "This Atman Supreme cannot be captured by discourses or by a sharp intellect, or even by teachings of the scriptures."

JAY LAKHANI is Director of the Vivekananda Centre, London, and Education Director of the Hindu Council UK. [hindu@btinternet.com](mailto:hindu@btinternet.com)





SRI MA ANANDAMAYEE SANGHA

## BIOGRAPHY

# Sri Anandamayee Ma, 20th Century Mystic

The God-intoxicated Bengali saint spent her life absorbed in the Divine

Six months before Sri Anandamayee Ma's Mahasamadhi at age 86, a young Chinese-American, Stephen Quong, had a private meeting with her. He adopted the name Umananda. Now a Vedic Astrologer deeply immersed in Hinduism, he wrote the following account for *Hinduism Today*.

FIRST READ ABOUT SRI MA ANANDAMAYEE in 1970 in *Autobiography of a Yogi* by Paramahansa Yogananda. That initial contact with her words, her picture and her inspiring life story touched my soul deeply. I was fascinated and wistfully yearned that someday I could meet someone like her.

In the years following, I had many inner experiences which I attributed to the unseen workings of Sri Ma Anandamayee—receiving guidance and inspiration in meditation through darshan visions with specific instructions. While these experiences were of immense benefit, I yearned for an outer confirmation of the inner guidance. I was still seeking the relationship with the incarnation of the *satguru*, which I felt was indispensable for spiritual progress.

Then one day in the summer of 1981, I heard from friends that Sri Ma Anandamayee was still alive in India. I wrote to her immediately, not really expecting a reply. I asked her questions about my *sadhana*, my life

direction, etc. To my great surprise, I soon received an aerogramme reply: "Your questions are too personal to be answered by correspondence. If you ever have a chance to come to India, I will answer them in person."

I was thrilled and elated to have received such a message from Sri Ma, but I felt uncertain about financing a trip to India. However, fate was about to help me—in a very unusual way.

In November, 1981, I was involved in a automobile accident. My car was crushed like an aluminum can in a head-on collision with a truck. The entire front end of the car was smashed beyond recognition except

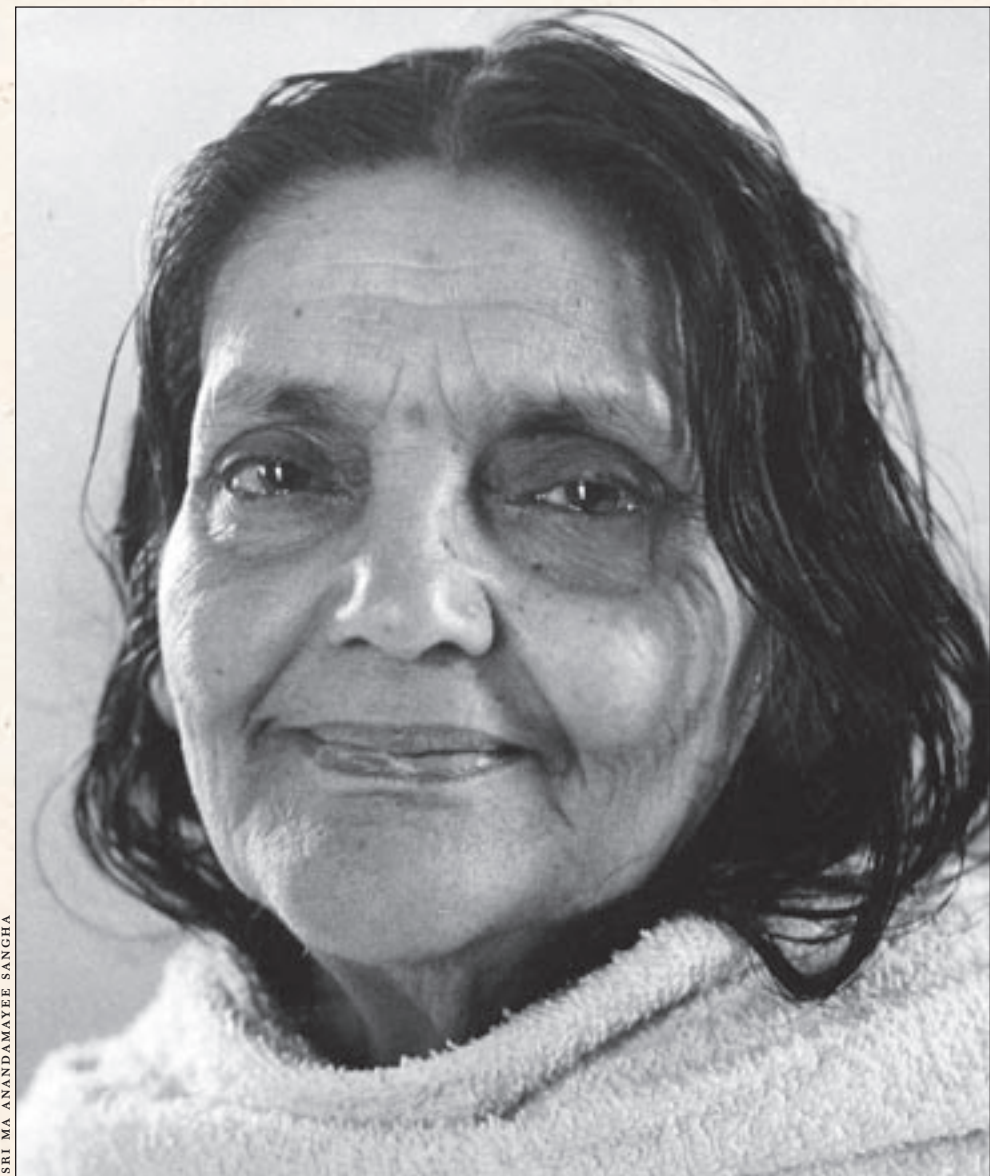
**Gazing at Infinity:** (left) Ma in her mid-twenties. Though she lived to be 86 (right), the Bengali saint was forever identified with her timeless True Self.

my personalized license plate lettered "JAI MA." I was knocked unconscious and almost died on the spot. While in a coma, I had the vivid experience of Sri Ma's blissful darshan (sight), and clearly heard the voices of brahmin priests chanting in Sanskrit this famous verse from the *Bhagavad Gita*: *Sarvadharmaan parityajya maamekam sharanam vraja. Aham twaa sarvapaapebhyo mokshayishyaami maa shuchaa*. It translates, "Abandoning all of your duties, take refuge in Me alone. I will liberate you from all of your misdeeds; grieve not!" Blissful at receiving Sri Ma's darshan and the words of Lord Krishna, I was totally content and prepared to depart my mortal frame.

Instead, I regained body consciousness. By Ma's grace I had a miraculously quick recovery from the injuries. Off crutches in only two weeks, I was soon flying to India, with costs paid for by the insurance settlement. I came face to face with Sri Ma Anandamayee in February, 1982, in Vrindavan, India.

Our meeting confirmed a precognitive vision which I had had in the summer of 1981, after receiving Sri Ma's letter. Just as in my vision, we met on the roof of her ashram shortly after sunset. One of her senior *brahmachari* disciples translated her Bengali into English for me. Two other women attendants were present. Sri Ma had just returned from a journey, and was taking rest. I was brought before her for a short private interview, but was warned not to ask her for mantra initiation; such a request could only be made after one year. I tried to distill years of questions into a few essential words. In the process, I realized that all of my questions could be answered by asking her just one.

Thus, to the utter dismay and consternation of the translator, my first and only question to Sri Ma was "May I have mantra initiation?" My reasoning was that the answer to this question would provide the answer to the other ones, such as: "Who is my guru?" "What is my *sadhana*?" and "What should I be doing with my life?" Sri Ma did not seem surprised or perturbed by my request. After a few questions about my family background and spiritual practices, she consented to give me mantra initiation on the next auspicious date. I was stunned. Was all this a dream? How could it be so easy?



SRI MA ANANDAMAYEE SANGHA

Did I really deserve to be her disciple? Sri Ma saw my transparent thoughts and with a gracious nod and smile, she indicated her complete, unconditional acceptance of me at that moment as I was. She confirmed our inner relationship, her wish to accept me as a disciple. I belonged to her and she belonged to me; until the end of time, we would never be separate.

At that moment, Sri Ma was nearing ninety, in poor health and suffering from intestinal parasites. In fact, she left her body six months later, on August 28, 1982. Yet even at that age, her spiritual radiance was undiminished, immense, awesome, almost mythical in proportion. It had almost no relationship to her joyous manners; instead, it was the radiance of the light of the Atman shining through the illusion of her physical frame. She had a titanic spiritual presence about her that transformed every-

thing within hundreds of yards into bliss. Wherever she went, she carried a portable Devaloka. All who came near her felt the ocean currents of Satchidananda coursing through her. Because of this, her foremost disciple, Bhaiji, titled her Anandamayee Ma, "bliss-permeated Mother."

Sri Ma never appeared like an ordinary human being to me. I never related to her as an Indian woman, or even as a Hindu saint, or incarnation of the divine Mother or as a *satguru*. She was a personification of Absolute Reality, dwelling always in a state of cosmic consciousness, the natural state of *sahaja samadhi*. Many claim to have achieved that state, but in Anandamayee Ma its attainment was indisputable.

Steeped in the all-encompassing broadness of the Sanatana Dharma, firmly established in the experience of absolute oneness, *kaivalya*, and brimming over with intoxicat-



ing bliss, Anandamayi Ma personified the highest ideal of Hindu spiritual achievement. Since her early years, when she had the spontaneous experience and fulfillment of yogic, Vedantic, tantric and devotional *sadhanas*, she had the capacity to answer any and all questions without premeditation or hesitation.

During over 60 years of spiritual instruction, the eternal wisdom of the ages flowed from her lips in an endless stream. Speaking in her native Bengali tongue, Ma revealed the deepest mysteries of life in quaint, pithy phrases potent with mystical implication. Her words echoed the Upanishads: "There is only one all-pervading Atma, naught else except the One. You yourself are a barrier unto yourself in the form of *samskaras* (impressions). The destiny of every human being is to destroy the veil that hides his own Self."

A keynote of Ma's teachings was remembrance of God through repetition of the name of God. Whether evoked through mantra *japa*, *kirtan* or congregational singing of devotional songs (bhajan), the name of God was the sure solution to all of life's problems. "If one loses one's being in the contemplation of the Divine Name, one can merge oneself in the ocean of Heavenly Beauty. God and His symbolic names are one and the same."

Saivites called her a Saivite, Vaishnavites claimed her as a Vaishnavite and Shaktas, a Shakta. Smarta Vedantins saw their highest philosophy pulsing alive in her. Christians and Muslims approached her without reservation. She was a Vedic *muni*, a *sarvagya*, blessed with the quality of omniscience. She

**"When the Supreme Experience supervenes, service to all is revealed as service to Self. Call it a bird, an insect, an animal or a man, call it as you may, but one can only serve one's own Self when serving any creature."**

—SRI ANANDAMAYI MA

never left India, never wrote a book, spent years in *mauna* (silence), had no guru, no lineage, belonged formally to no tradition, yet flooded forth a resounding *nada shakti* that originated in the Self and today continues to ripple around the world enigmatically empowering the spiritual search of many thousands. She said, "Sound used to rise up from my navel. I felt that the sounds touched every part of my body, and then worship would take place in every pore of my body.

This sound would rise into my head and transform itself there into the mantra Om."

Sri Ma was an enchanting singer, her vibrant voice captivating, transcendental, magical in its power to elicit the deepest feelings of devotion to God. This feeling of the immanence of God was emphasized in temple and Deity worship: "Worship is not a ritual; it is an attitude, an experience."

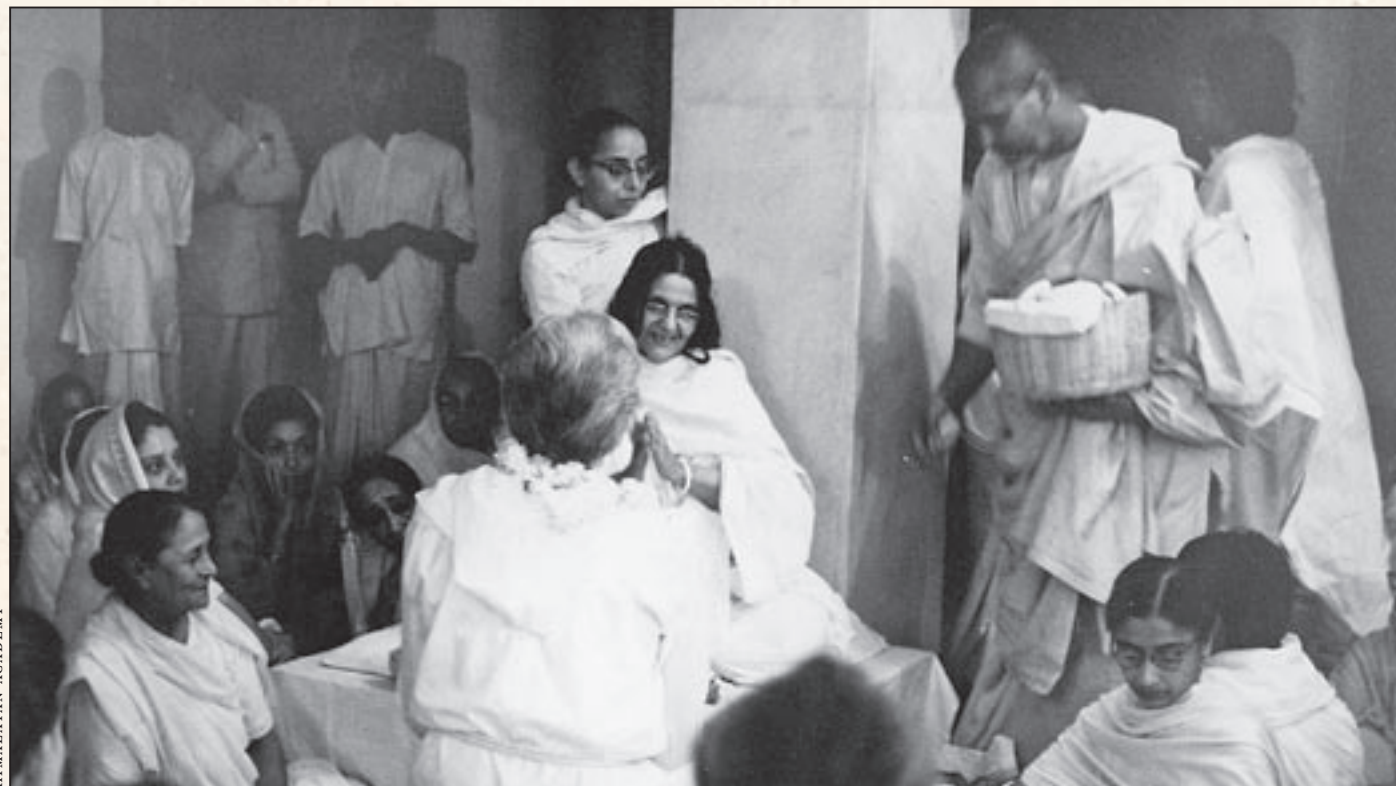
She stressed purity: "It is the pure, undefiled flower that finds a place at the feet of the Lord and nowhere else. Take great care to spend your life in spotless purity. Speak about Him, meditate on His Glory, try to see Him in everyone, Him who is the Self, the breath of life, the heart of hearts."

Sri Ma was ravishingly beautiful, in a completely wholesome and spiritually uplifting way. Unforgettable. For her, true *darshan* was: "See That which, when seen, the wish to see anything more vanishes forever; hear That which, when heard, the desire to hear anything else does not awaken."

Often asked whether she was Goddess, a Divine Incarnation, a *siddha* (yogi with

**When spiritual lights converge:**

*Sri Anandamayi garlands and blesses the young Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, founder of Hinduism Today, at a visit to her Ashram in 1969 with 68 of his disciples*



powers) or a tantric *sadhaka* (kundalini yoga adept), she would usually be silent or deflect the question. But once when she was asked "Who are you?" she said: "Purna Brahman Narayana!" (the Infinite God Eternal).

Later she added, "I am what I was and what I shall be; I am whatever you conceive, think or say. But it is a supreme fact that this body has not come into being to reap the fruits of past karma. Why don't you take it that this body is the material embodiment of all your thoughts and ideas. You all wanted it and you have it now."

On the nature of the guru, Ma said: "The guru actually emerges from within. When genuine search takes effect, his genuine manifestation is bound to occur; it cannot possibly be otherwise. The One, assuming for Himself the shape of the guru, of his own accord brings about His manifestation." Once the relationship to the guru was established, then surrender and obedience are essential. "Carry out without arguing whatever I say, but be certain that it is for your best," Ma directed.

Resolute dedication to the path of enlightenment, without compromise, was her constant admonishment: "How much more time will you spend at a wayside inn? Don't you want to go Home? How exquisite It all is. One is in his own Self the wanderer, the exile, the home-coming and home. One's Self is all that there is."

Ma advocated the practice of surrender and equanimity as universal keys to spiritual development: "In whatever circumstances you may be placed, reflect thus: 'It is all right. This was necessary for me; it is His way of drawing me close to His Feet;' and try to remain content."

Sri Ma was often lost in *bhava samadhi* and other forms of trance-like ecstasies. Once she stayed in *samadhi* for five days without any response to outside stimuli. When asked about it, she replied, "It is a state beyond all conscious and supra-conscious planes—a state of complete immobilization of all thoughts, emotions and activities, both physical and mental, a state that transcends all the phases of life here below."

In her later years, the *bhava samadhis* so common in her early life came less frequent-

ly. She was stabilized in *sahaja samadhi*, the natural state of effortless abidance in the Self regardless of one's external circumstances. When questioned whether she had descended to a lower level, she replied: "Whatever anyone may say is all right. But there is no such thing as higher and lower levels."

Sri Ma's realization embraced all opposites. Though distinguishedly beautiful



**In surrender to Sri Anandamayi Ma:** the author, Umananda, was among the last people to be initiated by Sri Ma. Today he is a Vedic Astrologer.

in appearance and motherly by temperament, she could equally display the more masculine, impersonal aspect of God. In her advanced years, she would still express the lustre, innocence and charm of youth encompassed by an aura of the wisdom of the ancients. She appeared to be in communion with higher deva-beings and higher *lokas* of existence amidst her activities. She remained unfathomable by the intellect, but immediately accessible through love. She respected the traditional customs of India, yet when in mystical trances, she often disregarded all religious convention. This generated serious concern among the strict brahmin community.

During her transcendental *bhavas*, she would be oblivious to differences of caste,

color, creed, race or even species. There were occasions where she shared food with those of other religions and "untouchables." On occasion she ate off the ground with stray dogs. Later in life, she mysteriously lost the ability to feed herself, and was thereafter hand fed by her attendants for her bodily sustenance. Throughout all these unusual circumstances, Sri Ma displayed indifference to hunger, thirst, heat, cold, pain or pleasure.

Despite her own sometimes unconventional behavior, Sri Ma encouraged her disciples to follow the orthodox codes of conduct. Interestingly, during the 1970's, when hippies flocked to exotic India, there was a Hindu backlash against their immodest dress and un-Indian conduct in ashram environments. The brahmin management of Ma's two dozen ashrams became very strict in their enforcement of brahminical caste rules. Some of Ma's Western devotees, who had adopted Hindu beliefs and practices, were on occasion excluded from entry, worship or residence in her ashrams. But Ma privately assured those mistreated that in their personal relationship to her, caste, creed and nationality meant nothing. She loved them unconditionally.

This East/West clash dramatically brought into focus the question of whether Western-born persons who adopt Hinduism will ever be popularly accepted as legitimate Hindus by the born Hindu. That question is still unsettled, and even twenty years later Westerners find cool welcome at the major ashrams in Ma's name. Their requests to use the guest facilities are politely refused. The centers themselves are fairly quiet. The pounding din of Ma's God-conscious presence is mostly a treasured memory brought to life a few days a year when throngs of devotees visit her *samadhi* shrine. Some regular frequenters of the ashrams are wealthy Bengali devotees, businessmen and government officials.

In her later years, Sri Anandamayi Ma was treated like the spiritual queen of India, often visited by Kamala Nehru, wife of the first Prime Minister of India. She became the protector and confidante of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, cabinet members and countless government officials. She was universally revered by millions of *sadhus*, saints and devotees. In January, 1982, she was selected by the *sadhus* of the Haridwar Kumbha Mela as their Ishta Devata, or beloved personal form of God, and rode a caparisoned elephant to lead the procession of Naga Babas marching toward the holy Ganga. Gopinath Kaviraj, the great savant-saint of Banares, called her Adya Shakti, the incarnation of the highest Spiritual Energy. And Swami Sivananda, founder of the Divine Life Society of Rishikesh, offered her the ultimate accolade, calling her "the purest flower the soil of India has ever produced."

**"I have no sense of pleasure or pain, and I stay as I have always been. Sometimes He draws me outside, and sometimes He takes me inside and I am completely withdrawn. I am nobody; all of my actions are done by Him and none by me."**

—SRI ANANDAMAYI MA



## SCRIPTURES

### Mukthabodha— Securing Our Hindu Heritage

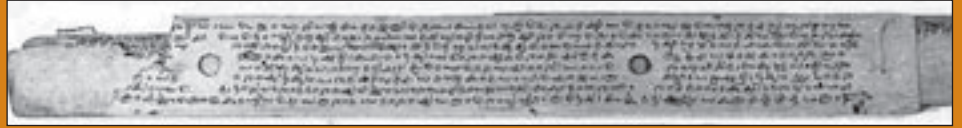
“THE MISSION OF MUKTABODHA INDOLGICAL Research Institute is to recover and preserve endangered treasures of India’s religious and philosophical wisdom and make them accessible for study and scholarship, and ultimately as a resource for humanity.” Behind these opening words on the [www.muktabodha.org](http://www.muktabodha.org) site you will discover a dynamic, dedicated team that has successfully taken on one of the greatest challenges to the continuity of Hinduism in the modern age: the preservation of mankind’s oldest scriptural heritage.

Founded in 1997 by Gurumayi Chidvilasananda, head of Siddha Yoga Dham Association and successor to Baba Mukthananda, the Muktabodha Indological Research Institute focuses on the *Tantra* and *Agama* traditions. The institute has programs in five areas: 1) a digital Internet library making rare Sanskrit manuscripts available to the world; 2) a Vedashala to preserve the traditional, oral education in Vedic recitation and ritual according to the Hiranayakeshi branch of the *Taittiriya Krishna Yajur Veda*; 3) publication of translations and commentaries on rare texts; 4) audio and video documentation of authentic performances of sacred chants and rituals; and 5) scholarships enabling outstanding Indian and Western students to receive training and research opportunities in this field to ensure a next generation of illumined scholars.

The institute has already made great achievements, continuing a digitization effort begun in 1995. After over 50,000 frames had been archived on microfilm, that method was replaced by digital photography. The first phase of the effort digitized Vedic Shrauta ritual and medieval Saivite manuscripts from libraries and private collections across India. The institute



MUKTABODHA  
INDOLOGICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE



Above: Palm leaf books; Vedamurti Shri Vivek L. Godbole teaching Sanskrit at the Muktabodha Vedashala in Satara, Maharashtra; (right) Saiva scholar Dr. Mark Dyczkowski instructs the data entry team in Varanasi; Muktabodha and IFP collaborators in Pondicherry display recently digitized manuscripts

went on to collect and digitize the core texts of the Pratyabhijna, Spanda and Krama schools of the non-dual Saivism of Kashmir. A third initiative has been ongoing data entry to bring the texts into searchable online formats. The institute’s most recent achievement is the digitization of 210,000 pages and over 2,000 mostly Saiva Siddhanta texts—all now online and accessible to the world—in collaboration with the French Institute of Pondicherry (IFP) and the French School of the Far East (EFEO). The current focus of work is to bring more searchable texts online for use by priests, scholars and translators. Interested readers are encouraged to contact the institute to make donations or offer collaborative support for the continuance of this important work. [info@muktabodha.org](mailto:info@muktabodha.org)





# Hindu Heritage Endowment

## FUND ALLOWS SON TO HONOR BANGLADESHI DAD

Shyamal Debnath of Toronto, Canada, is using the Hindu Heritage Endowment (HHE) to support Hindu temples, orphanages and schools in his native Bangladesh. He has established an endowment fund at HHE for that purpose and named it in honor of his father: Sri Chandra Madhab Debnath Endowment, fund #44. Shyamal also hopes the fund will shine a light on the needs of Hindus in Bangladesh.

Raised on Bhola Island at the mouth of the Meghna River on the Bay of Bengal, Shyamal left a politically and religiously tumultuous Bangladesh for Australia at age 29 in 1997. He was a student at Dhaka University and Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology at the time. “Many Hindus are unaware that Bangladesh has the largest Hindu population in the world outside of India and Nepal,” he said. “Unfortunately, we have been largely ignored.”

He added that the Hindu population in Bangladesh, now about 10% of its 140 million people, declined sharply after the 1947 partition of India and Pakistan and dropped further after Bangladesh won independence from Pakistan in 1971.



The loss of some 20 million Bangladeshi Hindus since 1971 represents one of the largest displacements of population based on ethnic or religious identity in recent history. Throughout this political and religious turmoil, Shyamal’s father, now a retired school teacher, continued his life-long habit of helping his fellow Hindus on Bhola Island.

“We lived in a special area for Hindus,” Shyamal recalled. “There were 50 to 60 families in our settlement. My father helped everyone. He organized his friends for Hindu religious

programs and procured grants from the local government for the disabled and for the elderly.” He also helped the very poor to cover the costs of marriages and funerals. “I got my sense of serving the community from my father,” Shyamal said. He hopes some of the income from his HHE fund will find its way to the Sri Sri Madan Mohan Temple in the Daulatkhan area of Bhola, where his father still labors to support the construction of a local temple and serves as a president of the temple committee.

Shyamal heard about the Hindu Heritage Endowment through HINDUISM TODAY when he was a student in Dhaka. He became the Bangladesh correspondent for the magazine, both writing articles on Hindu issues and translating the magazine for distribution to Bengali-speaking Hindus.

After nine years in Australia, Shyamal moved to Toronto last April, 2007, where he now works as a customer service officer for an energy company. “HHE is reaching lots of Hindu institutions badly in need of help,” he said. The orphanages he has visited in Bangladesh fall into that category. “Typically, there are 40 to 50 children, usually without enough food. They have a little rice and a little vegetables, but no protein, poor clothing, no medical facilities and poor housing.

“As far as I know, there were no dedicated endowment funds for Bangladeshi Hindu institutions,” he said. “This is the first one. And anyone who wants to contribute is certainly welcome to do so. You can be sure it will be put to good use.” To donate to this fund, visit our website.



Shyamal Debnath



### HINDU HERITAGE ENDOWMENT

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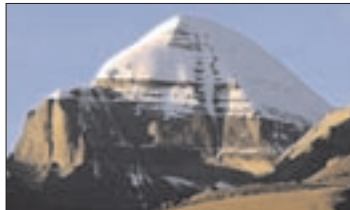
## OCTOBER TO DECEMBER ENDOWMENT CONTRIBUTIONS

<b>Kauai Aadheenam Monastic Endowment</b> Anonymous \$3,571.00 Vijay - Daksha - Neil Mithal 5.00 K. Lakshmi Kantha Reddy 335.00 Darmaguhan & Shivali Satgunasingam75.00 Other Donations 30,695.63 Total 34,681.63	<b>Boys School for Iraivan Priesthood</b> Anonymous 5.00 Bala Sivaceyon 17.58 Total 22.58	<b>Mauritius Saiva Dharmasala Endowment</b> Anonymous 200.09	<b>Swami Vipulananta Children's Home Endowment</b> Craig Bagdasar 50.00
<b>Iraivan Temple Endowment</b> Anonymous 2,576.00 Jeri Arin 330.00 Anuradha Badhwar 5.00 Meetu Badhwar 5.00 Suchitra Badhwar 5.00 Munnu Bajpai 100.00 Roger & Rosemary Brown 80.00 Bhani Karthigesu 600.00 Trond Liland 70.00 Yogesh Patel 200.00 Dhasan Sivananda 14.61 Other Donations 89,823.90 Total 93,809.51	<b>Kauai Aadheenam Matavasi Medical Fund</b> William & Barbara Bachmann 100.00 Maruthu Pandian Darmalingam 45.11 Vijay - Daksha - Neil Mithal 5.00 Gowri Nadason 105.77 Mrunal & Padmaja Patel 5,000.00 Kumar Ranganathan 100.00 Vayudeva Varadan 54.00 Other Donations 4,800.00 Total 10,209.88	<b>Alaveddy Pasupatheeswarar Temple Fund</b> Craig Bagdasar 50.00 Prasad Krishnan 4.50 Total 54.50	<b>Hindu Literature Fund</b> Anonymous 50.00 Vivek Iyer 50.00 Sivaramakrish Muthukrishnan 51.00 Total 151.00
<b>Tirunavukkarasu Nayanar Gurukulam</b> M. & Thaiya Krishnamurthy 25.00 Thamby Kumaran 148.00 Trond Liland 30.00 Ananthakumar Renganathan 50.00 Total 253.00	<b>Kauai Aadheenam Religious Art and Artifacts Fund</b> Rajadeva Alahan 153.00 Phillip J. Murphy 200.00 Total 353.00	<b>Hindu Heritage Endowment Administrative Fund</b> Krishnan Chawla 500.00 Vivek Iyer 50.00 Total 550.00	<b>Hinduism Today Complimentary Subscription Fund</b> Hiranya & Saraswathi Gowda 153.00 Jeff Lichtenstein 25.00 Total 178.00
<b>Kauai Aadheenam Annual Archana Fund</b> Sivanathan Batumalai 14.51 Gunavadee Caremben 7.86 Somasundaram Caremben 7.86 Sukanta Caremben 7.86 Kamala Guhan 10.00 Amooda Koothan 5.18 Saravan Koothan 5.18 Vijay - Daksha - Neil Mithal 5.00 Navukarasu Muthusamy 14.51 Subramaniam Pennathur 49.98 Kirtideva Peruman 10.35 Niroshnee Peruman 15.54 Srinivas & Liliana Rao 10.00 Devaladevi Sivaceyon 8.80 Nutanya Sivaceyon 17.58 Patudeva Sivaceyon 8.80 Hemavalli Sivalingam 1.78 Kantaruban Sivalingam 1.78 Rohini Sivalingam 17.74 Nitya Sivam 100.00 Potriyan Sivanathan 5.66 Uma Sivanathan 60.00 Samynaden Veerapen 21.43 Siven Veerasamy 14.03 Total 421.43	<b>Kauai Aadheenam Renovation Endowment</b> Anonymous 700.00	<b>A. Saravanapavan Family Murugan Temple Pillaiyar Shrine Fund</b> Niranjan Saravanapavan 2,000.00	<b>Kauai Aadheenam Yagam Fund</b> Ripla & Gaurav Malhotra 251.00
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<b>Hindu Businessmen's Association Trust</b> Paramaseeven Canagasaby 24.27 Vel Mahalingum 20.70 Manogaran Mardemootoo 51.77 Vishwanaden Mooroven 62.88 Easvan Param 873.01 Janaka Param 27.00 Total 1,059.63	<b>Kumbhalavalai Ganesha Temple Endowment</b> Craig Bagdasar 50.00 Manoharan Navaratnarajah 75.00 Total 125.00	<b>Sri Siva Subramaniya Swami Devasthanam Trust</b> Anonymous 200.09	<b>Yogaswami Hindu Boys' Home Fund</b> Dharmalingam Siddhan 25.00 Maruthu Pandian Darmalingam 45.11 Reuben Lelah 285.00 Ripla & Gaurav Malhotra 209.00 Yogesh Patel 200.00 Ananthakumar Renganathan 50.00 Dharmalingam Siddhan 500.00 Anonymous 200.09 Total 1,514.20
<b>Hindu of the Year Fund</b> Thamby Kumaran 40.00	<b>Malaysia Hindu Renaissance Fund</b> Anonymous 200.09	<b>Saivite Hindu Scriptural Fund for the Visually Impaired</b> Alex Ruberto 45.00 Anonymous 200.09 Total 245.09	<b>Kodiswara Satguru Malaysia Travel Fund</b> Jothiswarar 500.00 Kodisvara Jothiswarar 15.00 Sellamah Jothiswarar 15.00 Rani Jothiswarar 15.00 Siva Jothiswary 15.00 Kanesh Ramanathan 15.00 Total 575.00
	<b>Hindu Orphanage Endowment Fund</b> Kanoj K. Biswas 100.00 Vivek Iyer 50.00 Vijay - Daksha - Neil Mithal 5.00 Natraj Narayanswami 50.00 Yogesh Patel 200.00 Alex Ruberto 75.00 Rodney & Ilene Standen 30.00 Total 510.00	<b>Sri Chandra Madhab Debnath Endowment</b> Shyamal Chandra Debnath 100.00	<b>Maha Ganapati Temple of Arizona Endowment</b> Radha & Ganesh Krishnan 500.00 Vijay - Daksha - Neil Mithal 5.00 Shailesh Trivedi 700.00 Total 1,205.00
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	<b>Suntheram Family Trust Fund</b> Ramachandran Suntheram 1,000.00	<b>Manitha Neyam Trust Fund</b> Bala Sivaceyon 35.16	<b>Murugan Temple of North America Puja Fund</b> Ken Kanagalingam 251.00 M. & Thaiya Krishnamurthy 25.00 Vayudeva Varadan 54.00 Total 330.00
	<b>Hindu Press International Endowment Fund</b> Hiranya & Saraswathi Gowda 63.00 Baleswary Selvarajah 15.00 Total 78.00	<b>Kapaleeshwara Temple Orphanage</b> Prasad Krishnan 4.50 Yogesh Patel 200.00 Kumar Ranganathan 100.00 Sasidharan Sabesan 20.00 Anonymous 200.09 Total 524.59	<b>Rani Jothiswarar Memorial Fund</b> Selvanathan Jothiswarar 3,500.00 Murali Pillai 29.59 Total 3,529.59
	<b>Loving Ganesha Distribution Fund</b> Manoharan Navaratnarajah 75.00	<b>Manjung Hindu Sabha Orphanage Fund</b> Paraneetharan Damodaran 300.00	<b>Total Contributions</b> \$177,325.04
	<b>Swami Agnivesh Endowment Fund</b> Prasad Krishnan 4.50	<b>Pazhassi Balamandiram Orphanage Fund</b> Anonymous 5.00 Prasad Krishnan 4.50 Yogesh Patel 200.00 Total 209.50	
	<b>Saiva Agamas Trust</b> Anonymous 200.09 Ganga Sivanathan 284.00 Total 484.09	<b>Karnataka Temple Development Fund</b> Chandra Gowda 18.00 Hiranya & Saraswathi Gowda 303.00 Total 321.00	
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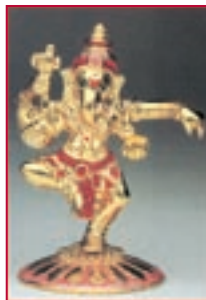


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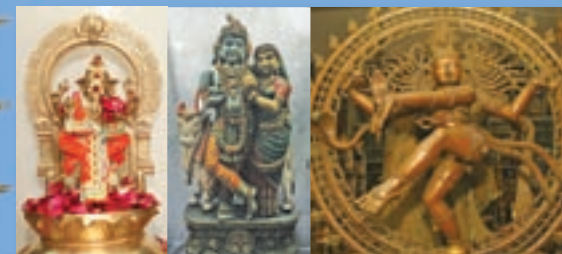
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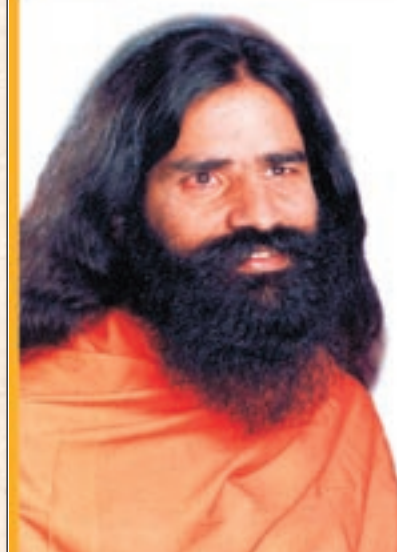


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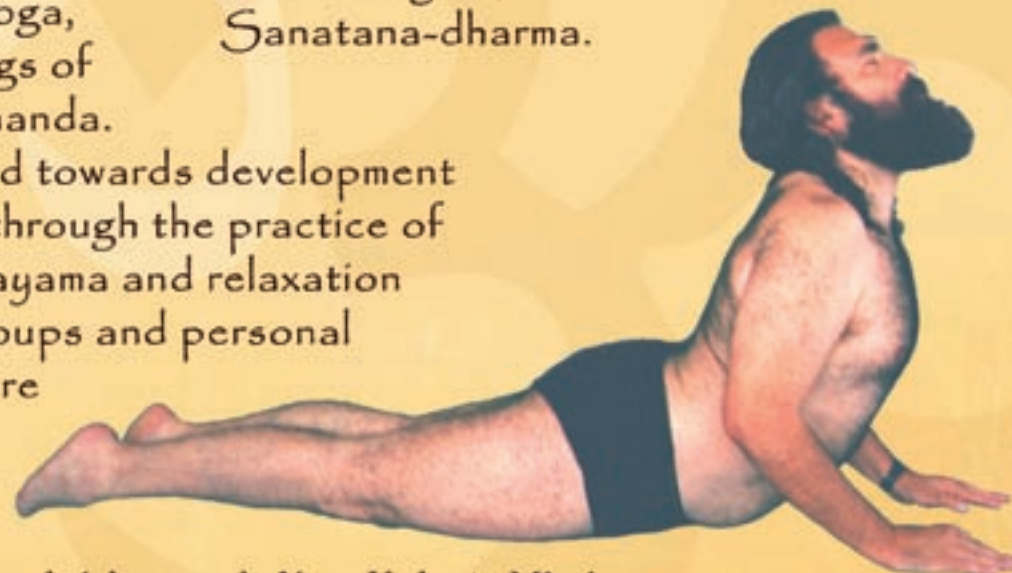
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